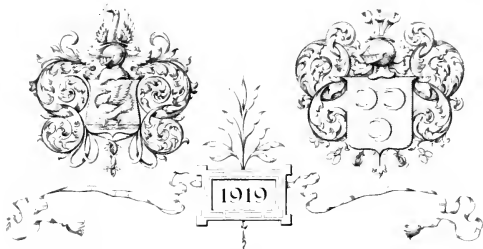


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CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

granddaughter of

General Peter Gansevoort, junior

and widow of the

Honorable, Abraham Lansing

of Albany, New York

Agostino
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SELECTIONS FROM THE
SERMONS

OF

PADRE AGOSTINO DA MONTEFELTRO

EDITED BY

CATHERINE MARY PHILLIMORE.

SECOND SERIES.

NEW YORK :

JAMES POTT AND CO.,

14 AND 16, ASTOR PLACE.

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Preface.

THE reputation of Padre Agostino da Montefeltro, as a preacher, has, if possible, increased since the first selection was made from his sermons and offered, in the form of a translation, to the English people at the close of the year 1887.

The reception which the sermons met with from all classes, which must be wholly ascribed to the simplicity, pathos, and eloquence of their original conception, has encouraged the translator, again at the special request of Viscountess Ossington, to prepare another series of translations from the discourses preached during last Lent in the Church of San Carlo al Corso, at Rome.

It is the first duty of the translator, on this, as on the previous occasion, to state that the sermons have never been revised by the author himself; that they do not pretend to be more than *selections* from the course delivered by Padre Agostino; that the translations are made now, as in the first instance, from the same source—the broad sheets of the newspapers which were hawked about the streets, and bought up in thousands within a few hours of the delivery of the sermon they reported in their daily columns.

But there is a certain security for the veracity of these reports, because, when the same sermon has been preached twice or thrice at different places—Florence, Turin, and Rome—and reported at these different places by three different newspapers, a comparison of the various reports will show scarcely any variation in the sermons. There may be a different form of introduction, a paragraph transposed here and there, or a different method of illustration; but the main line of argument is always the same—almost word for word; and this is no despicable testimony, not only to the accuracy of the reports, but also to an extraordinary effort of memory on the part of the preacher.

It is not necessary to revert again to the eloquence of Padre Agostino, or to his marvellous power over his congregation, for a sufficient impression of this will have been gathered from the English newspapers, where the echoes yet linger of the enthusiasm produced by his last course of sermons delivered at Rome only a few weeks ago—an enthusiasm which, as Padre Agostino truly observed in one of his sermons, was indiscreet in its over-zeal, and provoked a counter-demonstration, of which the incident of the explosion of the bombshell before the High Altar of the church, was the only important indication among others of a trivial character.

The explosion of the bombshell, happily innocuous so far as the preacher and the vast congregation were concerned, created, as may be supposed, a considerable panic for a few moments.

A demonstration of greater enthusiasm than ever on behalf of the favourite preacher succeeded; but when order was at last restored, and during a moment of profound silence, Padre Agostino addressed the people in a few words:

“I have asked you from the first not to make these demonstrations of applause; they only give occasion for counter-demonstrations on the part of those who disapprove of my sermons. From this day forward I entreat you to be more calm, and to refrain from signifying your approbation in any form whatsoever.”

On the occasion of his next sermon, Padre Agostino touched again upon the incident during an interlude in the discourse of the day:

“The pulpit,” he said, “is no place for the exposition of personal opinions on the one side or the other. It is the place for me to speak to you of the sublime truths of Christianity; the lofty ideas they suggest, the great examples they put before you. It is the place from whence to tell you of a faith which can remove mountains—of a religion which can raise a man above all trivial worldly concerns, which can give a noble purpose to his life on earth, and the promise of an eternal reward hereafter. If my words are so insufferable, so obnoxious to anyone that he desires

to take my life, he is welcome to it. However much it might grieve me to leave my orphanage at Pisa with a future before it as yet insecure, I am ready and willing to lay down my life for my faith, my religion, and my God, Who is the God of the poor and needy, the weary, and the oppressed, Who is also the God of pardon and peace.”

These words sum up the teaching of Padre Agostino, and none shall be added to them which can bring down so high and holy a theme into the petty arena of party politics, or let any jarring element of worldly strife interfere with his noble mission to preach the Gospel of Peace to mankind.

CATHERINE MARY PHILLIMORE.

THE COPPICE,

HENLEY-ON-THAMES.

May, 1889



SELECTIONS FROM THE SERMONS

OF

PADRE AGOSTINO DA MONTEFELTRO,

Preached at the Church of San Carlo al Corso, Rome, 1889.

I.

THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION.

MY BRETHREN,—There is a God. The conviction of the existence of God is inalienable from the mind of man; deep down in our very being it has cast strong firm roots which can never be eradicated. In a moment of madness the Atheist may exclaim, “There is no God”; but even as he utters it the innate conviction of his heart, the reasoning faculties of his mind, belie his words; while in the hour of grief and peril—in the moment when the veil of illusion drops from his eyes—“My God!” is the spontaneous exclamation which bursts from his lips.

Who then is God? Our reason, when not obscured by sophistry, perceives and affirms that God is a Supreme Being of absolute power and perfection—infinite, the Maker and Governor of all things—Who of His boundless mercy breathed into man the breath of life; and man, a privileged creature, the crown of all creation, became endowed with a spiritual and immortal soul, made in God’s Own image, after His likeness.

The spirituality of the soul is proved by the consciousness of its own identity; by faculties which exceed all other powers natural or acquired, physical, moral, and religious. The truth as to the immortality of the soul is established by our intellectual faculties, by the power of volition, by the longing for happiness which is inherent in our hearts, and by our inward conviction of the attributes of God—His wisdom, His justice, His holiness. Is there, then, no relation betwixt God and man

—no connecting link? Religion is the connecting link. But it may be said of religion, as we read in the Gospel it was said of the Lord Jesus when He was presented in the Temple—it is “*A sign which shall be spoken against.*” *

God, the Creator of heaven and earth; God, the All-merciful Father; God, the Supreme Good; God, Who is Love, gave to man the gift of free will; but He did not give him—for it would have been an impossible gift—the gift of independence also. That man should depend upon God is a matter of absolute necessity; and this implies on the part of man duties at once indisputable and sacred in the highest sense of the word. These duties, which unite us to the infinite Majesty of God, are all comprised under the head of religion. Now, in the present age, what sort of a reception does religion meet with among men? What sort of respect does it inspire? To what extent is it practised?

The most fatal mistake that man can make is to forget God; to become indifferent to religion. My brethren, the world's history can record no more fatal mistake, no worse calamity than this. And in the present day this most disastrous forgetfulness of God and religion has a special character of its own. Our contemporaries, absorbed in the contemplation of themselves, infatuated by the cleverness of their own discoveries and their own inventions, forget that they are themselves created and dependent beings, subject to law, with duties to fulfil towards God, their Creator. Indeed, they make it their impious boast that, after centuries of worship, they have succeeded in obscuring the glory, if not altogether annulling the power of the Living and Eternal God.

The men of the present age believe themselves to be absolute proprietors of the world; they no longer look upon themselves in the light of tenants at will. If we are to listen to them, we may believe that humanity is marching onward with rapid strides towards complete independence. Honour, nature, reason,

* St. Luke ii. 34.

science, liberty, fraternity, progress—these my brethren are the favourite utterances of the hour; high-sounding words which, familiar in every mouth, are the embodiment of the one fixed idea, the one prevailing force, which urge the century along its headlong, brutal course. On the one hand there are those who say they have no need of religion. Why? Because they have plunged so deeply into their worldly business that their conscience is submerged, and they have quite forgotten God; or they are occupied in sinful pleasures which remove them far away from any thought or practice of good, destroy their intellect, and drag their whole nature through the mire.

On the other hand there are those who say, with a sceptical smile: "God! yes, that was a very useful idea for the Middle Ages, but it cannot be maintained any longer now. We have quite settled that matter is eternal; it is an axiom of science. In the Middle Ages the religion of God was a Theocracy, and the principles very ably conceived and worked out; but we have got past that now, it is an old story, and it is high time we were rid of it." This is the exact description of the nineteenth century, in the full tide of its worldly preoccupations and all-absorbing interests. In former times a young man might for a time stray from religion, but he would still keep fast hold of faith in God the Father, and hope in Christ Jesus our Lord; he never questioned the power of prayer to lift the soul to God; and ever in his heart would remain some smouldering sparks of the love and fear of God, only awaiting the faintest breath to fan them into a flame.

But how is it now? Look around! what do you see? Look at the society in which we live and move, and you will meet on all sides a bitterly hostile opposition to any recognition of God. "Away with the Sacraments," is the cry; "away with the Altar; away with Christ; away with God!" This is the sad picture of to-day, and it is not over-charged.

Have you ever allowed your thoughts to dwell upon the melancholy spectacle presented by those who, standing so to speak on the very threshold of life, and as yet barely furnished with the

rudiments of learning, have already begun to deny the existence of God, are ready to dispose with a cynical smile of the being and immortality of the soul, and have no religious belief whatever. It is a spectacle, my brethren, which, by its rare combination of cool presumption and crass ignorance, would provoke a smile, if for very pity it did not rather move one to tears.

But yesterday, perhaps, they passed their final examination, but yesterday they vacated their seats in the class-room of the college where they learnt the first elements of philosophy. They are not, on account of their youth and the necessarily elementary character of their studies, capable as yet of one deep or serious thought, and yet they can afford to despise a religion which can reckon in its ranks the greatest philosophers, the most brilliant examples of genius in science, literature and art. Little do they reckon in their mock wisdom—these babblers of science, fit only to scan verses, and elicit bad harmony from the poet's lyre—little do they reckon of the nineteen centuries through which Christianity has pursued its triumphant course. In their eyes the nineteen centuries count for nothing; Christianity is but dust in the balance of history. And therefore they have no reverence for Christ, or for the Altar of Christ; they have no belief in God. This is why they are not ashamed to blaspheme His Holy Name; this is why they heap contempt upon what they term the grovelling age of Christianity.

My brethren, young and old, let me remind you of the saying of a great man: "I have examined the truth for myself *and* I believe." Do you also examine the truth for yourselves and you will believe. But they (those babblers of science of whom I have been speaking) never examine the matter—they do not want to do so; that sort of investigation is quite beneath them—and without examination they reject Christianity and every practice of religion. "Religion," they say, "what of it? it is quite possible to live without religion."

Is it possible? Can one indeed live without religion. No, my brethren; life is not possible without religion, unless you are prepared to live a life which wears the brand mark of iniquity

and injustice. This is what we will consider this morning. It is of supreme importance for our social well-being, for the welfare of our country, present and future, that the hapless youth of the present age should be warned in time against the pestiferous atmosphere of Atheism, which weighs like lead upon the century in which we live, and poisons the very air we breathe. Oh! hapless, miserable youth, a prey to your own passions, asphyxiated by the overwhelming pervading pestilence of scepticism, come back to the fold of religion, and you may yet be saved. Is it possible to live without religion?—let us see. What is religion? In the word religion is comprised the sum total of the relationships which unite man to God. These can be gathered under three distinct heads: religious dogma, moral conduct, worship. Religious dogma is the expression of the relationship between the finite intelligence of man, and the infinite wisdom of God. Moral conduct is the expression of the relationship between the imperfect will of man and the perfect will of God. Worship is the expression of the gratitude, thankfulness, and love which the creature owes to the Creator.

Is it possible to live without these? Throughout the whole world there would be but one answer: No. See if, among all the nations of the world, you can find one without faith, without morals, without worship—in short, without religion. You will not find one. You may, perhaps, find here and there some one individual—some monster of humanity—who will dare to utter the horrible blasphemy; but his words will be drowned in the concourse of adoration which, gathered from all parts of the universe, ascends in prayer to the Throne of God.

Whether you take up one by one the links of the world's history, and thread your way back through bygone centuries; whether you extend your researches throughout the globe, over its wide tract of continents or to the utmost isles, be the nations civilised or savage, from the humblest dwellings of the poor to the palace of the prince, there will be the temple of God, there will be God's Altar. Man may have lost sight of art, science

may have slipped from his memory ; but he can never forget religion. Beginning with Newton, who proposed a toast to the Eternal Lord of mankind, and thence through all the brotherhood of science who have borne testimony to the fact that there is no nation without religion, it has ever been the unanimous opinion that such a belief must be looked upon as the corner-stone of social well-being ; and that, wherever man has left his track upon the earth, the traces of religion have been found side by side with it.

In the Eastern world, among the Jews, in the Christian community, the idea of the Infinite is predominant. In the annals of Rome, that kingly people, with their philosophers, their military leaders, their pro-consuls, their poets, their men of genius, their historians—all these are so many witnesses to the existence of religion, to the fact that religion was the foundation of social order (a truth supported also by Machiavelli), and further, that religion is the source of social prosperity.

What, then, are we to conclude from this fact which reappears in every quarter of the globe, at every epoch of its existence ? One conclusion only is possible ; it is this : That religion is an essential element, an indispensable, integral part of our innermost being. Man has need of religion to enable him to live ; without it he cannot live. Listen to the voice of reason. If it were possible to uphold the fatal doctrine which Voltaire characterised as the doctrine of the madman, if it were possible to uphold Atheism—that is to say, if it were indeed true that there is no God—then, my brethren, we might be able to exist without religion. For what purpose would religion serve, as a link between God and man, if there were no God ?

But there is a God. You yourselves are convinced of the fact. I have already, I hope, proved it to you. I hope in God that upon this point you are in no manner of doubt. Then, if there is indeed a God—God the Creator, from Whom we derive our existence—how is it and why is it that we do not worship Him, and give Him thanks for the being we receive from Him ? If there is a God—God the Father, Who has “ set before us life

and good, and death and evil"—how can we help observing His most holy laws? If there is a God Who, after death, will come to be our Judge, ought we not to prepare ourselves to appear before His awful tribunal.

Reason teaches us that man is necessarily dependent upon his Creator, and that he must acknowledge this state of dependence by worshipping Him heart and soul. Nor can it be urged, as a reason, that God being in Himself perfect and blessed for evermore has no need of the homage of His creatures. It is true that God has no need of the worship of His creatures; nevertheless, His creatures cannot on that account be dispensed from worshipping Him. God's creatures must occupy an essentially relative position to their Creator, with relative duties to perform. This is a fundamental law of our being. Those without the faculty of reason pay their tribute in obedience to the unalterable law of instinct, but you who have been called to the law of liberty can "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable* service."* The fact of creation once admitted, religion follows as a matter of absolute necessity.

But not only can we not live without religion because it is the primary law of our being, but because our happiness depends upon it. What, in truth, is the secret of happiness? The happiness of man consists in the development and perfecting of his faculties. In what does the chief exercise of man's faculties consist? Knowledge, love, work. In order that a man may be happy, his intellect must have a firm grasp of the truth. The intellect of man is formed for truth. As the plant turns to light and sunshine, so does man's intellect seek after truth. It is as natural for the intellect of man to seek for truth as it is for the plant to turn towards the sunshine and light.

In order that a man may be happy, his heart must incline to the love of virtue. As the bird is formed for flight, so is man's heart formed for love. In order that a man may be happy, his

* Rom. xii. 1.

conscience must have a rule whereby he can regulate his actions. Where are these conditions to be found, if not in religion? Religion leads the intellect up to perfection by placing it in a right relationship with God; the intellect then directs the heart in the same perfect way by bidding it rest in God; and finally religion regulates our actions by putting the conscience in harmony with God.

Man's happiness, then, consists in religion; and as perfect happiness is not to be found on earth, religion supplies what is lacking here by giving us the hope of a future life hereafter. Hence the expression of peace and happiness which is never absent from the countenance of the sincerely religious man. But it is not only because religion is the fundamental principle of our being that we cannot live without it, or because it is the essential condition of our happiness; but also because in it lies the secret of our true greatness, the secret also of our power. If you would see man in his greatest, noblest aspect, then look at him by the light of religion. This greatness is of God, in Whose image, after Whose likeness man is made. But take away the greatness that he derives from religion, and what becomes of man? If the words of Holy Scripture have not already placed the picture with living force before your mind, you have but to consult your own personal experience to bring it home to your own understanding.

If, indeed, we are not linked to eternity by every earnest hope and desire of our hearts, which of us, as life by life hasteth by—which of us would not be ready to exclaim: "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery; he cometh up and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay!" What place can he claim in the order of creation, when he lives but a few years upon the earth?—Perhaps, during that time, he makes some little stir in the world, and then he passes away to the sleep of the grave. Do you call this life? Is it not rather the mockery of life? The condition of the beasts that perish is preferable to our own! for at least they have no

remorse for the past, no bitterness in the present, no fear for the future !

The secret of our power ! Wherein does the secret of man's power lie ? What is the source of his strength ? It is from religion that man derives a force which is indomitable because, while it instils into his mind the principle of resistance to oppression and wrong, it also prompts the noble words : " I fear God ; but I have no other fear." When a man who has no religious principle, whose actions are regulated by the mere desire of personal comfort, finds himself face to face with an oppressor determined to trample under foot every principle of justice, and even the rights of conscience, that man will shrink away in cowardly inaction. It is for this reason that Aristotle says : " The soul which does not fear God is a soul without courage." It is a timid soul, because just as a man who is afraid of everything is a man without courage, so the man who fears nothing is also without courage if he does not fear God.

And Bacon : " Take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man who to him is instead of a God or *Melior Natura* ; which courage is manifestly such, as that creatures without that confidence, of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human nature in itself could not obtain." *

Stay a moment, for I have as yet said nothing compared to what I have to say. Not only is it impossible for us to live without religion, because religion is the fundamental law of our very being, because it is the condition of our happiness, because in it lies the secret of our greatness and power ; we cannot live without religion, because it is religion alone which distinguishes us from the brute creation.

Now, my brethren, what would you choose as the distinguishing mark of our superiority over the brute creation ? Perhaps you

* Bacon's Essays, " Of Atheisme," p. 67.

would say our reasoning faculties, our longing for perfection, our power of speech? There is no manner of doubt that it is by the power of thought, from the moment we utter the words, "I think," that we proclaim our superiority over the brute creation; and that until the gorillas have written their "Divina Commedia," until they have set up their schools in the woods, we need not acknowledge their claim to be our ancestors.

There is no manner of doubt that our longing for perfection is manifest in the efforts we daily make after further improvement, while these gentlemen—our would-be ancestors—in an age which is supposed to be one of universal progress and improvement, are exactly what they were in past times. There is no manner of doubt that we proclaim our superiority by the words "I speak," because it will be a long while before the wild beasts of the forest send us the report of their speeches in their daily papers or their reviews. Nevertheless there are those among modern naturalists who have thought they could discover some semblance of the power of speech among the animals.

But when man lifts his eyes to Heaven, and says, "I believe in God," and then falls down on his knees to worship Him, then, indeed, the brute creation remains at an immeasurable distance below Him; and the moment when man appears in his true position of lord of the creation is that in which, on his knees before God, he utters the words, "Our Father, which art in Heaven." Why, then, will we choose to make our journey through life with our eyes fastened on the ground, our thoughts chained to earth, in the wilful, blasphemous negation of God? "This is not being a man," exclaims Alfred de Musset; this is a complete surrender of manhood, because it puts us into the same category with the beasts, to whom alone it is given to exist without worship.

There was once a young man who, having completed his studies in a foreign city (there is no need to specify which), returned to his country, and, being without either manners or diffidence, he chose the occasion of being in a select company to make an open profession of his Atheistic creed. Perceiving

that no one shared his opinion, "What!" he exclaimed, "do you also belong to that imbecile class who still continue to believe in God? It is plain that you have never stirred a yard from your home, and that you have never heard the opinions of men who are now in the van of the progressive movement of mankind. If you had been through the schools as I have, if you had heard the lectures of my professors, you would soon have got rid of such stupid notions."

"I beg your pardon," replied the master of the house, "there are at this moment under my roof two creatures who share your opinions; they are my dog and my horse, and they have arrived at them without the needless formality either of going through the schools or of attending the professors' lectures; but at least they have the good sense not to make a boast of it." The answer was humiliating, but it was well-founded, because among the most highly-reputed of modern physiologists it is laid down as an axiom that man is not a simple species of the animal kingdom, but forms a fourth kingdom—the kingdom of humanity; and of this last conscience and the religious faculty are the two characteristic marks. Hence it must appear, for it follows from strict scientific demonstration, that, it being of the essence of man's nature to be religious, upon this rests his claim of being a rational being, and not one of the brute creation. Therefore the man who lives without religion degrades himself from his position as a human being, to put himself on a level with the beasts that perish; he becomes, in fact, a monster of his kind. Again, I repeat, it is not possible to live without religion, because a man's life *without religion bears on its face the stamp of injustice and crime.*

Let us now consider justice. What is justice? Justice is that virtue which metes out to every individual that which is his due. A son owes his existence to his father and mother, he has moreover received from them everything necessary for the development of his faculties, and in this way he contracts a debt in proportion to these obligations, a debt which is discharged by what we term filial piety. If a man refuses to pay this debt, or

fulfil these obligations, he is not only an unnatural son, but he is unjust, because he does not pay his neighbour—and that the nearest and dearest of all neighbours—that which is his due.

The citizen owes his country a debt of much the same nature as that which a man owes his mother, because his country will protect him when abroad and shelter him at home. In this way he contracts a debt in proportion to that which he receives, and strict justice demands that each citizen should concur in maintaining the honour and glory of his country. Hence the term “patriotism,” which is nothing less than a man’s religion towards his native country. Finally, justice demands that a man should render to his benefactor that which he has received from him, for to receive a benefit is to contract an obligation which it is our duty to repay, either in the literal sense of the word or else by gratitude.

God is our Father. He is the God and Father of all; all we have, all we are, we have received from Him. God is more to us than our native country, because our country is an earthly country, and He is the Father of Heaven; and, to sum it all up, God is our greatest Benefactor, therefore it is not just that we should live without paying Him the homage due to Him.

The man who lives without religion lives the life of a bad son, who will not discharge his debt of filial piety; he lives the life of the bad citizen and of the base ingrate, who refuse to acknowledge the benefits they have received; and the man who lays himself open to such charges cannot call himself an honest man, he cannot say that he is just. Life without religion is the very essence of injustice.

“Religion,” said Bacon, “is the weapon of science.” But he might have continued that it is the best weapon we have in the warfare of life. Another great thinker has emphasised this further by saying: “If there was no such thing as religion, there is only one happiness in life that could have been mine.” And what was that? That of never having been born!

Without religion, without its heavenly light, without its hopes, there would be no sense, no object in life. Without

religion there would be no peace for the heart, no peace for the conscience, no peace for the mind. No peace for the heart, because no sooner is man separated from God than he falls back upon himself. Ask all the wise men that have ever lived if the study of science alone has sufficed to satisfy their impatient curiosity. No peace for the conscience, because every bad action is like a link in the long chain of remorse. No rest for the mind, for outside the pale of religion there is nothing to fix its uncertain speculations, and it wanders aimlessly from this doubt to that. This it is, my brethren, believe me—believe it, young men, if you have not already experienced it—this is the great proof of the necessity of religion: the doubt and anguish of the spirit.

Look at the man who has set out in life with doubt for his companion; the doubt as to the existence of God, whether he owes any duty to God—poor, hapless man! Doubt springs up in front of him, it surrounds him on all sides. Yesterday he doubted the existence of God, to-day he doubts whether his doubts are well founded; he is doubtful of his very self. He looks up to Heaven and says, "Perhaps." At every step he makes on his journey through life he is confronted with the great problem of existence—the relationship betwixt God and man. He does not understand it; he cannot explain it; he tries to force it from him. He throws himself into the study of matter, and his genius produces some invention of marvellous ingenuity; but his soul makes no discovery whatever. If anyone tries to speak to him of God or of religion, he will answer, "Leave me alone, let me be. I am an engineer. I do not pay any attention to those kind of things." But the reply is obvious: "Nevertheless, you are a mortal man. Do you know whence you came? Do you know whither you are going?" "No!" "Well, if you do not know that, how can you have a moment's peace of mind?" And when life itself is present to our minds only in the light of an unsolved problem, how can we regulate the thoughts, desires, and actions by which it ought to be formed? And it becomes impossible for us to wear its crown with any dignity,

let alone that special crown to which, as Christians, we are entitled.

When peace has fled from our minds, joy has fled with it. Every fond illusion, every hope, even the fairest, fades from a soul robbed of its faith—a soul without religion. For the sceptic, when he has depopulated Heaven, has at the same time robbed earth of every charm ; joy and hope have been frightened away like birds before the swoop of the vulture ; melancholy, disgust, and despair present themselves in their stead, unbidden guests, and from that moment the abyss of despair begins to yawn in front of him at every step.

“ I do not care for life,” cried one of these unhappy youths to his companions ; “ I am so utterly wretched ! ” Without the check of religion, the passions unrestrained make havoc of the soul, and that is why terror and despair lead it before its time to the verge of life. We have no longer any control over our powers, doubts assail us as to the whole course of our life in this wretched world, we totter on the edge of the abyss where we have strayed when we ceased to have religion for our guide. But this is not all ; there is something yet more terrible still. Take for example a man who has been successful all his life, who has never failed in anything he has undertaken ; but now he says, “ I am seventy, I am old, there is nothing left for me but to die ” ; or take another example—that of a woman who has lived all her life without religion. In the world she has had a brilliant success, but now she says, “ I am seventy years of age, I am old, there is nothing left for me now but to die.”

You may live the life of the sceptic as much as you please, but for all your efforts life itself flies before you with the rapidity of lightning. The man who makes pleasure his daily occupation, the one object of his life, does not see that even this must in time be itself exhausted, and that meanwhile all his energies are consumed in the pursuit of it ; and then look at him as he approaches the summit of life, and begins the descent on the opposite side, perceiving at every step that the grave to which he is approaching—which, indeed, lies open before him—and nothing

else, is his goal. Then, when pleasures—more evanescent than the beauty of flowers at the decline of the summer's glory, more unstable than the straw carried away by the wind—have passed away, what remains in their place? Nothing but vanity. Who can conceive the anguish of the man who stands beside the corpse of one dearly loved, his mind tortured with longing to fathom the future, his gaze fixed on the open grave? In frantic despair he consults every school of learning he appeals to every science, he looks up to Heaven and back again to earth, and "Perhaps," is all the consolation his doubts will vouchsafe to his despair.

Again, if the soul limits itself to the earth as the only world of whose existence it can take satisfactory cognisance, even then—low as it has fallen from its high estate—there are memories of the past, forecastings of the future, which like lugubrious phantoms arise to disturb its peace, and many, many a subject of remorse recurs to cast its sinister light upon the future which is advancing upon him—a future from which he recoils with horror. Oh! happy then if, while there is yet time, he can turn to seek for God.

But, alas! there are many who, to the last, close their eyes to the light, and make as if they lived without any thought for the future. But if they are able [to deceive others they cannot succeed in deceiving themselves. Beneath that apparent tranquility there lurks a terrified conscience—a heart wretched in its misery; and if this kind of existence does not snap of itself with sudden violence, it consumes away in desolation and despair. Others there are who, in sheer desperation, "seek death in the error of their life, and pull destruction upon themselves with their own hands." They think that the marble sepulchre will hide them from sight—that they will have found annihilation in the chaos of eternal night; and behold, they have fallen instead into the hands of the Living God.

This is the picture of life without religion, and yet nothing that I have said comes near to the reality. Fully to understand that you must read what these miserable men say of them-

selves—you must read what, with an agonised heart, St. Augustine says in his “Confessions.” You will find there a chapter which begins: “Lord, I felt my whole existence shattered at the moment in which I separated myself from Thee.”

It is, then, *not* possible to live without religion; and the man who attempts to do so is like the shipwrecked mariner on the ocean waste, or the pilgrim who has missed his way in the wilderness. Those unhappy wretches who have lost God have lost their only anchor of hope upon earth. Too late they find out their loss; and when they turn for help to the idol of fate which they have made to themselves, they find it enthroned in a heaven of brass, to whose pitiless face they appeal in vain. Then, in an exceeding bitter cry, they lift up their voice in blasphemy and folly, lamentations, terror and despair; and but two alternatives remain to them—the existence of the brute, or the death of the suicide!

My brethren, it has been my lot to see such a man as that at a moment when, unmoved by the ordinary human passions, his conscience prompted the utterance of his thoughts; and I have heard him speak. You will hardly believe me when I tell you what he said. Even he, the Atheist, admitted the necessity of religion. Yes, the Atheist, when he is candid and sincere, does not say, “I have no religion.” Why? Because he knows that these words are contrary to common sense; that by uttering them he would place himself in the category of an unreasoning animal. The Atheist does not say, “I have *no* religion”; he says, “I have my religion.”

Now I will tell you frankly that I have never been able to understand this expression. Does man indeed think that he can make up a religion of his own? Have we not said that religion is the expression of the sum of the relationships which exist between God and man? Upon these relationships man's nature is absolutely dependent, and, to be consistent, we must either accept the religion which God has given us or not have any at all.

I have *my* religion, is as much as to say, I take from religion as much as I like. This, of course, is a very convenient plan;

but do you not see that by these means there might be as many religions as there are systems? What would you say of a citizen who proclaimed in the streets, "Down with the laws of the State!" What would an officer think of a recruit who chose to say, "I serve my country and my Sovereign in the way I please." Indeed, on this principle the thief might perfectly resist the policeman with the remark: "Let me alone, this is the kind of religion I chose—to worship God and rob my neighbour."

Man has not the right to say, "This is my religion"; but God says: "This is My religion; it is for you to accept and follow it." Religion is in fact a rule which we must follow, by which we must regulate our lives here, and by which hereafter we shall be judged. There is no period of life when man can do without religion; but his need of it becomes most imperative in the moment of anguish, in the hour of death. Grief dispels all fancies, it tears the veil from every illusion, and brings us back to the realities of life.

The soul which in the hour of prosperity has strayed from God will return to Him in the hour of grief. How much more so if grief is the herald of death! My brethren, religious belief is ever in harmony with death. The sincere believer is always ready to welcome death with joy. To the non-believer, to the infidel, death appears as an unparalleled disaster. How can this be? It may well be urged: Surely to the unbeliever and the sceptic the bed of death can only appear as a last foothold upon earth, from which he may take an advantageous spring into those realms of chaos which have long been the object of his desires. No, my brethren, as the soul advances to meet death, every step it makes towards the grave brings it within the influence of a light from the grave itself which dispels the shadows of error and prejudice.

This is what happened to the philosophers of the last century, Voltaire and Diderot. It was necessary to establish a guard round their bed of death, to protect them against such an enlightenment. And so, in our time, these precautions have been multiplied; leagues indeed have been formed to surround

the dying bed of the Atheist—leagues which could only be characterised by the blasphemous name of the “Society for the Protection of man against God,” which have for their object to sustain the Atheist to the very last gasp in his unbelief. Can there be greater monsters of iniquity, and barbarians of cruelty, than those who would rob the dying man of his right to be enlightened, even at the last? These are they who make liberty their boast, who invoke it on every occasion, for the word is ever on their lips! But remember that, if it is in their power to drive the minister of God’s mercy from their brother on his bed of anguish, they cannot drive away God. Even from the last breath God can gather up the first sigh of repentance; then God has forgiven, and man is saved.

Bless God that in the soul not utterly dead to God, that can still long for him, there is something in the approach and contact of death which has power to rekindle the smouldering faith, and the dying man feels the need of faith in God. God shares with him the hour of grief and sorrow. He unveils to him a vision of hope, He points his soul to Heaven, and through the parted cloud reveals that Infinite Love which is ever ready to have mercy and to forgive. This is my comfort when I am told that someone has died without the consolations of religion. God has so great a love for the soul which He has created that He is quite certain to have sent at the last some ray of light, and the dying man has been converted and healed.

But, my brethren, if we have strayed from religion, do not let us wait for that moment to return to it; because death may surprise us unawares. Let us shake ourselves free from the entanglements of prejudice and error. Let us have the courage to shake off the tyrannous yoke of the world’s opinion; then with a free heart and mind we can take up the easy yoke of Christ and find peace. Then shall we experience the infinite consolation of the Gospel of Peace, won for us by Christ Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith—Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

II.

THE OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST RELIGION.

MY BRETHREN,—We are at this moment in the midst of a terrible strife—a bitter, relentless strife betwixt the forces of good and evil, duty and passion, the law of God and the unrestrained licence of man. Within is our double nature, as it is after the flesh, and as it is after the spirit: the carnal mind chained to earth by every sensual desire; the spiritual mind fixed on God, and the Heaven whither it is bound. Without are the conflicting forces which stand for ever arrayed against each other—the disciples of unbelief against the children of God; and the battle is a deadly combat for the destruction of religion, as if religion did not represent, either to man as an individual or to the world at large, man's first and foremost need.

My brethren, religion is indispensable to man, both individually and socially; it is also indispensable to him as a comfort in sorrow. As an individual it is indispensable, because, as we have seen, it is the fundamental law of his being, the condition of his happiness, the source of his greatness; that moreover it is the distinctive mark of his superiority over the brute creation. In his family life it is the foundation of all education, union, and love. For sorrow, which is inseparable from the life of every human being, there is, without religion, neither consolation nor hope.

But is it true that objections can be urged against religion of sufficient gravity to authorise its rejection? My brethren, before leading the chosen people into the promised land, Moses sent before him twelve spies, chosen out of the twelve tribes, to search out the land of Canaan and bring back an exact description of the country and its inhabitants.* Far from showing themselves

* Numbers xiii. 31-33.

worthy of the trust placed in them, they contented themselves with a hasty glance over the land of Canaan from the tops of the surrounding mountains. Fear prevented them from forming a just impression of it, so that they returned with an "evil report" full of exaggeration and inventions. They agreed that certainly it was a fruitful land, a land flowing with milk and honey; but they added that it was peopled with inhabitants great and tall—"giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight, therefore we be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."*

And the people murmured against Moses. But Joshua and Caleb, who had also inspected the land, and who were brave and fearless men, after they had made a true report of its fertility, added: "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not."†

This good land is the image of religion. All agree that religion is desirable and good, individually and socially, and the only real antidote to grief. But yet there are certain popular prejudices against religion which cause men to stand aloof and view it with suspicion and distrust. These prejudices do not take the form of consistent unbelief, but they suffice to hold men back from becoming the followers of religion. In different disguises, and ever varying the mode of attack, it is yet always the same enemy who makes war upon religion and liberty. I say *liberty* as well as religion, because any attack upon religion implies also an attack upon the liberty of the subject.

In the first centuries the attack took the form of superstition, which, in its blind fury, had recourse to the exterminating powers of fire and sword. In the dark ages it arrayed itself against Christianity in the garb of ignorance; of servility in the day of

* Numbers xiii. 31-33.

† Numbers xiv. 8-9.

imperial supremacy; and then, from out the ashes of massacre and crime, left by political revolutions, it arose in the hideous form of intellectual revolt, supported upon the shoulders of unlicensed freedom of speculation and individual pride.

In the present age the battle rages upon the ground of indifference. Heresy is a false faith, but it is still a form of belief in something. But now there is no faith at all; it is a period of universal unbelief, and there is not even standing-ground for the heretics of former time. In a barbarous age the passions of men, despite their unrestrained fierceness, would still sometimes give place to remorse in the soul—remorse which opens the way to repentance. Now, if there is less violence and oppression, there is also less remorse. The intellectual rebellion of the day is not characterised by open violence; if anyone revives the old cry of “Down with religion!” it is uttered by some veteran of a past age; that is not the language of the hour. The heart-breaking opposition we have to contend with now repeats the conduct of the prodigal son; it betakes itself to a “far country”—the far country of cold, dispassionate indifference.

It will be my endeavour this morning to reach this indifference, and so to penetrate it that you may all contemplate, in its own true and holy light, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We must contemplate it in the bond of charity, that charity which you have the right to expect from the messenger of the Gospel; for it is the duty of the messenger of the Gospel to be in charity with all men, and, above all, with those who have gone out of the way, because it is their very unhappiness which gives them a greater claim upon our love.

Many wonder that there should be such amongst us; but after all we have heard, after all we have seen, taking into consideration the difficulties we have to contend with, the wonder is not that there should be so many gone out of the way, but that they should not exist in greater numbers. And, instead of murmuring and complaining, let us lift up our hearts and hands in prayer to God, and ask Him to have compassion upon them,

and to send forth an army of apostles—apostles of charity in behalf of their mission of truth.

The first prejudice against religion—the first objection which is urged against it—is that “religion is an old story.” “*Padre*” (father), a young officer said to me a little more than a year ago, “*Padre mio*, the sermons you preach, the things you tell us, are very beautiful, but they belong to a bygone age.” Surely it is not for a century—a century which has run wild on the subject of antiquities—to assail religion on the score of years! No one thinks of taunting an old man with his grey hairs. They are, on the contrary, his crown of glory. Yes, it is quite true that religion is old—it is very old; in fact, by means of an unbroken succession of Bishops and priests, it stretches through the long ages of the world: the age of barbarity and ignorance, the age of civilisation and science, through times of peace and favour, through times of struggle and victory, till it reaches back to the Mount of Calvary, the Cross of Jesus Christ; then, following the vicissitudes of the chosen people, it closes its second epoch with Moses and Aaron; and still retracing its steps past the caves of the prophets and the tents of the patriarchs, we find it, in its third epoch, with our first parents in the cradle of the world; thence, spreading its wings like a dove, it flies back to Heaven whence it came.

Yes, religion is old—it is very old! And as the Pyramid of the desert has watched for many a long century the course of the Nile, so religion has seen defile before it the generations of mankind—republics, dynasties, and empires. They crumble and decay, and scatter the ground with their ruins. And still unshaken, unscathed by time, religion keeps its place upon the earth. Where are those who persecuted Christianity in its cradle? who have since taunted it with length of days? They thought to dig the grave of religion, but have been swallowed up each in his own; fathers alike and children, generation after generation, the Church has dismissed them to their rest with prayer and psalm.

Yes, it is true religion is old, but time writes no wrinkle on

her brow, and every scar incurred in centuries of conflict with the world is the record of some victory won. Is it not also plain religion *must* of necessity be old—as old as the world in which we live? For what is religion? Religion, as I have told you in a former sermon, is the link which unites man to God; in other words, the sum of the relationships which exist between God and man. Therefore, from the moment of creation, when God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and gave him the gift of reason whereby he might know God, and a heart capable of loving Him, religion sprang into life. It was a Divine gift to man, the first link of that chain of light and liberty and love which was to draw man as with cords to Heaven, and unite him to his God, and from age to age it has lengthened as it stretched from one generation to another, unchangeable in itself, but still reaching a further and further stage of development for the benefit of mankind.

You complain that religion is old; that, I understand, is your objection. But what would you say if it were new? You would have a right to say: “If this thing is so necessary, why did not God give it sooner to mankind? Why must we bear a yoke now from which our fathers were free? If we have done without it all these centuries what occasion is there for it now?”

Let us contemplate for a moment what may be described as the new forms of religion. What are they? They are nothing but the product of the pride of man’s heart, the corruption of his will. We have seen them—these new forms of religion—in their first freshness, all brand new from the forge where they have been fabricated; but they bear on their face the stamp of error. Perhaps their novelty may for the time enlist a few followers, but these soon fall away, for, as the freshness of novelty begins to fade, wonder gives place to contempt.

The religion of the Church of Christ need fear no alarm from such insignificant rivals—rivals too late in a field which she has occupied so long that she could claim, on that plea alone, the allegiance of the earnest seeker after religion. It is the very fact of her antiquity, my brethren, which makes the glory of religion; it is

that which proves her Divine origin. But, it is urged, the religion of the Church is changed. What does that mean? That religion is like the tree which every year changes its leaves, and increases in girth. The religion you profess is changed, you repeat; it is not what it was in the Primitive Church—the religion of the Patriarchs and Prophets, the religion of the Gospel, the religion of the Apostles. Holy and pure, the religion of the Primitive Church did indeed bear the marks of a Divine origin, and as the gift of God from Heaven, it was the joy of all mankind; but earthly passions have since supervened, the priests have allowed themselves to be influenced by worldly interests, long centuries of ignorance and barbarism succeeded each other, and time, the great destroyer of everything, has destroyed religion also.

But is it possible that you can imagine for a moment that God, the Author of religion, could forsake His work, and leave it at the mercy of human caprice—that God can be unfaithful to His promise. The works of man must indeed yield to the decaying influence of time, but it is not so with the works of God. Look at the sun; it shines ever with the same steady, undiminished light. The winter's snow, the flowers of spring, the summer's glory, the autumn fruits, day and night, seed-time and harvest, succeed each other according to God's eternal promise; and can it be supposed that, while these, His lesser works, fulfil His will, His greatest work of all—religion, the means He has chosen for revealing His glory to mankind—would be left to chance? An earthly artist may indeed throw aside his work in disgust, and refuse to look at it again. Not so Almighty God. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said: "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." * And again, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." †

And has not the Church kept the truth? Look at her vast army, the soldiers of the Cross of Christ, as they stand in battle array to protect their sacred trust. In vain is the sacrilegious

* St. Matthew xvi. 18.

† Ib. xxvii. 20.

hand put forth to touch the truth as it has been revealed to His Church by Jesus Christ, for neither force nor stratagem can wrest it from her.

In the presence of Cæsar, be he the individual of past times or the democracy of the present hour, you may see the poet falter, the philosopher turn sophist, the orator stultify himself; but the Church, whose influence can sway monarch and people alike, remains true to herself—not one jot or one tittle will she yield, either to the treacherous kiss of false protection or the iron heel of violent persecution, till at length both flattery and menace have spent themselves in vain, like the idle fury of the waves which beat upon the rocky shore.

Take for example any ship, go on board her, and sail round the world, and wherever you find a Christian you will also find the same Creed, the same Commandments, and the same Holy Sacraments of the Church. Appeal to the past, if you will; we do not fear the reply. You may bid these sepulchral monuments which line the walls of our ancient cathedrals totter and fall, and the graves to open where the dust of centuries repose; I will call upon that dust to bear witness to the truth—dust that was, perhaps, some heart which once beat high for God, or lips which moved in the profession of that faith by which it will one day be quickened into life.

Yes, in the midst of human mutability the Creed remains immutable; but not as some Egyptian mummy, swathed and motionless in embalmed preservation within the dark silence of the Pyramid; but proclaimed aloud in every church and cathedral, and ever showing its burning, shining light, century after century, along the great highways of mankind, even as the sun which day by day “goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*”

Throughout the nineteen centuries of Christianity there has been no peace for the Church of Christ, but perpetual warfare. There is no single article of the Creed which has not been

* Psalm xix. 6.

cavilled at, sifted, and called in question; and yet it has remained intact, perfect in all its parts, the Creed of Christ's Holy Catholick and Apostolick Church throughout the world. But still I seem to hear someone say: "You cannot deny that there are changes in your religion. Have not the rites and ceremonies undergone some change? Have not the laws relating to the Church's discipline been modified and altered so as to suit the varying circumstances of time and place?" Certainly, I agree, and the Church may modify them still further; it is within her province to do so. But this discipline is not religion itself; this is but the garment, not the substance of religion.

Every time you put on a new garment you are not yourself changed, and the Church, which is the spouse of Christ, becomes, so far as it is lawful, all things to all men, if she can by all means save some.* It is a self-evident fact that religion struggling for bare existence, and driven to hide itself from persecution in the Catacombs, could not in such circumstances have the same splendour of adornment as when, in after ages, the Church numbered amongst her sons the Kings and Princes of the earth. But it is still the same Church now that it was then.

Look at that mighty tree, the king of the forest. For centuries the pilgrim has found rest beneath its shade. Every year it renews its blossom and sheds its leaves; every year it exposes its naked limbs to the gales of autumn and the winter's snow, and as the branches fall off others take their place; but it remains, for all that, the same tree. So it is with religion, with this difference: that while the stroke of the axe, a flash of lightning, or, in the long course of centuries, natural decay may bring down the old oak at last, the Tree of Calvary, the Cross of Christ, fears neither storm nor tempest, and the hand of man and the work of time are all too powerless to cut it down, for, rich in immortal promise, it bears everlasting fruit.

It should be a thought of infinite consolation to us that nothing can extinguish the pure and holy light of religion, and

* 1 Cor. ix. 22.

that ever, behind the clouds of error and prejudice which for a time may come between it and mankind, it preserves a steady ray. You might as well imagine that the sun could be extinguished in the heavens, for no less terrible than the darkness of the universe without the sun would be the formless chaos of the world without religion. Oh! torch of Divine Light, continue to fill our souls with thy radiance, that men may see and walk by thy rays; cast thy glad beams over the length and breadth of our land, that all may look and live; and if any such there be who shut their eyes to the light, penetrate with thy genial ray the black darkness of their souls, and win them back to thee.

But now we are met by another objection. Men say, we admit that religion did at one time cast a great light upon the world; that it has done much for the social welfare of mankind; and we acknowledge it with unfeigned gratitude. But now that civilisation has become universal, and that the ideas of law and order are generally understood—now that we have the light of science and education, which is universal—all this will take the place once occupied by religion in promoting the social welfare of mankind. This objection places religion on the footing of a servant whom you consider yourself entitled to discharge after due recognition of his long and faithful service.

Let us examine it more closely. The acknowledgment of the benefits conferred by religion upon mankind is something gained certainly; but, on the other hand, it would be difficult to call them in question—they are so many and so great. When the old Pagan world, sinking beneath the weight of vice and corruption, was feebly uttering its last groan, Christ, from the height of Calvary, lifted up upon the Cross, breathed anew into the expiring world the breath of life-giving love. When the barbarians, pouring forth in devastating hordes, prepared, like some devouring torrent, to sweep away the ancient civilisation of Greece and Rome, it was the Cross of Christ alone which could arrest them midway in their course. When Mahomet set forth to conquer the world anew, and lead the nations captive to his false religion, again the Cross of Christ went out to meet him; and not

once, but at every successive period of the world's history—at Poitiers, Granada, and Navarino—the advance of the Crescent has been met and driven back by the power of the Cross.

When our country has been torn in pieces by civil dissensions, religion has ever thrown herself among the ranks of the combatants to conciliate the jarring elements, and set at rest the strife; while in matters of State her voice has ever been raised in the cause of right and justice against oppression and wrong.

But what avails it to recall these benefits. They are open to all. Why, then, would you seek to scare away this benefactress of mankind? Because now we have our civilisation instead, and that does as well. Our civilisation! But has civilisation made this century less corrupt? Is this an age characterised by justice—by deference to lawful authority? Is this an age illuminated by noble characters, by great virtues, by a high standard of morality? My brethren, you know perfectly well that, upon examination, the civilisation of the century is not in accordance with the principles of righteousness. “At all events,” you plead, “there is a very general appreciation of law and order.” “But,” I ask, “are the crimes fewer in number in consequence?” On the contrary, they are greatly multiplied. You have but to consult the statistics; indeed, the very magistrates themselves will tell you that they are appalled by the number they record.

At least you will admit that our knowledge has cast a great light upon the world? It is the light of petroleum—“our scientific knowledge.” Yes, but what kind of result is to be looked for from a science which reduces man to the level of a beast, and so makes him no longer responsible for his actions? “But education—the general instruction we have provided for everybody?” What for, if, when the people ask to be told of God, and the soul, and the immortality which lies before them, they can receive no answer whatever from their pretended instructors?

Oh! my God, turn not Thy Face from us, hide not Thyself away in displeasure, lest, in our blindness, we grope after the devices and desires of our wayward hearts; but leave us Thy holy religion

to teach us that we are brethren—children of one Heavenly Father. Leave it with us, to dry our tears in the hour of bitter grief; leave it with us, to help us to overcome our selfishness, and to give life to every good and noble thought; leave it with us, that by it we may lift our hearts from earth to Heaven, and to Thee.

But there is yet another objection urged against religion, more serious because of its efficacy in alienating the allegiance which youth would naturally render to the cause of religion. It is said that religion is the enemy of progress, that it is the enemy of science, and, above all, that it looks askance at all the progress made by modern science. My brethren, it was once said of liberty, “Oh, Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name!” and now, in the same way, it might be said, How many a falsehood is palmed off upon our young men, and upon the ignorant populace, under the name of progress. Let us consider the matter seriously. There are three kinds of progress: (1) there is material progress; (2) there is intellectual progress; (3) there is moral progress. For those who recognise only the material world, there can be no progress whatever. An animal remains an animal still; and the crab, which has made its movements sideways ever since the Creation, has never made a sufficient advance in knowledge to enable it to alter this system of progression. But we are speaking of men, and not of the brute creation.

No one will dare to say that religion has placed any obstacle in the way of material progress. No one can be so absurd as to suppose that the telegraph system, the railways and gas, are in any way an offence to the dogmas of religion. The Bishops accede, on the contrary, readily to the request made to them to bless any such enterprise; no religious-minded person refuses to avail himself, on the score of religion, of the advantages they afford, and it is only just to say that they are, on the contrary, the class of people most willing to forward and to promote them. On the contrary, the blessing of the Church is upon all industry. The Church teaches the lesson of content to the working man; those of justice and benevolence to his employer.

You cannot, indeed, put your finger upon any form of industrial progress which has not received distinct countenance from religion; and I may cite as an example the nation ever foremost in such industrial progress—the English—who paid their tribute to religion when they wrote upon the highest dome of the first London Exhibition the inscription, “Glory to God in the Highest,” and directed the solemn intonation of the Hundredth Psalm during the distribution of the prizes at the close of the Exhibition.

Is religion at variance with intellectual progress? But what if religion be the source whence all intellectual progress is derived? Religion is, in fact, the reflected light from the infinite knowledge of God upon the genius of man; the means by which the Creator stoops down to raise the intellectual faculties of His creatures nearer to Himself, the Fountain of all wisdom. Who can deny that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has indeed been the light of the world? Civilisation is the child of Christianity, and no one will have forgotten the saying of that great man: “A little philosophy inclineth man’s minde to Atheisme; but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s mindes about to religion.”* Newton, who was a wise man if ever there was one, was wont to uncover his head (the seat of his powerful intellect), whenever he heard the name of Almighty God; and Ampère, falling upon his knees, exclaimed: “O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy greatness, and how surpassing in its beauty is Thy true religion!” In the face of such testimony as this, it is only the fool who can pretend that religion is a stumbling-block to the intellectual progress of mankind.

Perhaps it may be urged that religion impedes the progress of art. Let anyone dare to advance so monstrous a statement, and we Italians need not go far afield for the refutation. We have but to look at home; the witness of our own country will suffice. We may find it in the works of Fra Angelico, Perugino, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Canova; and,

* “Of Atheisme,” Bacon’s Essays, p. 64.

if their silent eloquence will not suffice, we have but to turn a page of Dante, or strike some note of the harmony of Rossini or Pergolesi. Remember, also, that there was a period when the arts and sciences found their only shelter in the cloistered shade of the Church; this modern science has the ingratitude to overlook when she makes her arrogant boast about the progress it has since made.

Will you say that religion is contrary to the moral progress of mankind? But do not the words of the Lord Jesus, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect," point the way to such progress in its highest development? Were men indeed to fulfil the Gospel precept, nothing further would be wanting to make a Heaven of earth. I would ask the advocates of progress to examine the lives of the saints if they wish to see what real progress is. A single example would suffice: St. Vincent de Paul, who, without one penny that he could call his own, was the Apostle of Charity to millions of wretched, despairing souls, delivering whole provinces from the ravages of the plague, and rescuing from destruction the stranger and the captive, the fatherless and the widow.

Yet when, by an appeal to history and the testimony of such names as Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, and many others, we have disproved the stale arguments that religion is opposed to science, it is still urged by our adversaries that religion *fears* the progress of modern science. Why should religion have any such fear? Can one truth contradict another truth? By all means continue your discoveries for the honour of your country; it is for that that God gave you the gift of intelligence. What! can He Who made the light fear the light? But remember, also, that religion is the steward of impenetrable mysteries, into which science may not dare to force its way.

I might ask, Are there no hidden depths in science also? What then would be the influence of a religion without its "secret things"?—a religion so small, so insignificant, that it can be all brought within human ken—when our own life is a mystery, the things around us another mystery? If religion were alone

without mystery, that in itself would lay it open to contempt, as the mere fabrication of the human understanding. Consider what are some of the mysteries of our religion: the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, His death upon the Cross for our redemption. What a miracle of love! "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Are not such mysteries as these calculated to stir our hearts to their innermost depths, as we ponder upon the unspeakable greatness, the ineffable sweetness of our holy religion? Then "let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."† My brethren, I firmly believe that there are many who would gladly draw near to God in the exercise of religion, if they were not held back by political prejudices. It is the office of religion, they say, to encourage despotism; it is a foe to liberty. In the first instance I would have you to know that religion and politics are essentially different, and can never be amalgamated. It is true that our Lord said: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." But what is meant by the Cæsar of the Gospels? It is authority, by whatever name it is called, under whatever form it appears; and this is why religion enjoins submission to authority.

Who can say that religion is incompatible with liberty when, in reality, they are twin sisters? Or rather, religion is the mother of liberty; for who was it who gave liberty to all mankind? and where was liberty to be found before the coming of the Lord Jesus? At Rome? But those patricians were often great tyrants, and subsequently the tyranny of the Tribunes was more insufferable still.

Perhaps in Athens. But there it had ostracism for its basis. Perhaps in Sparta. But the citizens of Sparta were tyrants with Helots for slaves, and slaves whose condition was of the most abject kind. In short, Spartans, Athenians, and Romans were all slaves of the State. At the coming of Christ the earth was

* St. John iii. 16.

† Rev. xiii. 17.

peopled with slaves; He came to break the captives' chain, and bring them forth into the light of liberty. He it was Who said: "One is your Father, which is in Heaven," * when He taught us that we are all equal in the sight of God. He it was Who first set the example of humility by Himself washing the feet of the Apostles; and by His death upon the Cross, for all mankind, laid the foundation of real liberty upon earth—the liberty of souls redeemed from the captivity of sin and death.

That liberty is the watchword of the Church, and if it is denied to her she will purchase it for herself by martyrdom. The true Christian knows no servility of soul. Had St. Peter the soul of a slave when—poor fisherman as he was—he accused his judges of "having killed the Prince of Life, Whom God hath raised from the dead" †—and to those who commanded him to cease from preaching, replied, "We ought to obey God rather than man." Had St. Paul the soul of a slave when he refused to accept his liberty at the hands of his gaolers, demanding that the magistrates should "come themselves, and fetch us out" ?—which the magistrates did, "and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city." ‡

Did any servile fear prevent St. Chrysostom from withstanding the Empress Eudoxia on behalf of a poor widow? or St. Ambrose from arresting the Emperor Theodosius on the threshold of the cathedral after the unrepented massacre of Thessalonica? or St. Francis of Assisi, when he forbade the brotherhood from gratifying their curiosity by even looking at Otho of Brunswick? More than this, let the body be laden with fetters, the soul of the true Christian remains free. Faith remains fixed and immovable like the rock amid the shifting sands of politics, which at any moment may be scattered to the winds.

But still, it is urged, religion is at variance with the liberal doctrines of modern politics. This is the ignorant popular cry—this is the cry of a less ignorant but more blameworthy press. But history, on the contrary, proves that all the great institutions

* St. Matt. xxiii. 9.

† Acts iii. 15.

‡ Acts v. 29.

which may justly boast of having established the liberties of the people have their origin in religion, and have religion for their basis. Look at the great charters of liberty of the Middle Ages ; the municipal freedom of even the most insignificant State ; the communes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries—there you will find the true model of democracy and self-government by the people. It was the people who imposed the taxes, who elected the magistrates, and raised the armies. Was this done in spite of religion ? On the contrary, it was then that religion was an all-powerful influence, and it was ever used in establishing and countenancing the self-imposed authority of a free people. Indeed, the popular elections took place in the church, on the ground that it was the temple of liberty.

Before there was any question of political reform, the Church protected and favoured all those laws and constitutions which were intended for the restraint of an undue excess of power, such as the States-General of France, the British Constitution, and the Spanish Cortes. The Church did not wait for modern revolutions to teach her what were the lawful rights of the people ; and, in the case of a Christian monarchy, when did the Church ever support the prerogative of the Crown against any just demands of the people ? or jeopardise their liberty to serve God, and their neighbour, and work out their own salvation ? Far otherwise. Religion, which is the mainstay of truth, is also not only the mother, but the constant friend and companion of liberty, and if religion is cast out of the earth liberty will be cast out with it.

Out of all the accusations brought against religion, what then remains ? Is religion the enemy of mankind ? Nay ; rather religion is man's best, truest friend, the gift of God from Heaven to assure us of His love and forgiveness, to unite us all in the bonds of brotherhood, to moderate every evil passion, to comfort us in every sorrow, to sanctify every joy. The watchword of religion is at once threefold and eternal—Truth, Love, and Liberty ; and those who would diminish it by any one word out of the three are traitors to her cause.

III.

THE SOURCES OF UNBELIEF.

MY BRETHREN,—I endeavoured to show you, in my sermon of yesterday, that religion is indispensable to man in his individual capacity, in his social aspect, on account of his liability to sorrow; that we should on no account allow ourselves to become alienated from religion by the objections urged against it, as they are without foundation, nothing in short but idle prejudices eagerly disseminated by the enemies of religion in order to deprive us of those consolations of which religion is the only source. One of these groundless objections is that which is urged against the *intolerance* of religion; because, although there can never be any toleration for error, for the erring there should be abundant toleration. This religion both aims at and enjoins.

Let us turn back some nineteen centuries to contemplate the scene in the Judgment Hall, and the two who meet there, eye to eye and face to face. The One bereft of every vestige of external power, to all appearance a defenceless Captive, but in Himself Omnipotent. The other the chosen representative of earthly power and authority, but with neither strength of will nor decision of purpose. I speak of Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate, the ever-living contrast of Truth and Falsehood, Courage and Cowardice. Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, is there to bear witness to the truth, while Pilate, half in doubt and half in irony, puts the question, "What is truth?" Pilate saith unto Him, "What is truth?"*

Here, then, are the personifications of truth and error, and of the eternal antagonism which has ever since prevailed between them. From century to century, from generation to

* St. John xviii. 38.

generation, the followers of Jesus Christ bear witness to the truth which came down to them from Heaven; and still the cry of Pilate is echoed from the earth: "What is truth?" Unbelief—open unbelief—that is what now stares us in the face. It has no scruple in offering itself as a good exchange for faith; it makes its evil influence felt everywhere—everywhere its loud, discordant voice is heard; this is the fulfilment of the prophecy uttered with mournful earnestness by St. Paul at the earliest dawn of Christianity.

There is, in fact, established in every country of Europe a certain school of thought, represented by men who live without religion—without God—in the world. Impotent to accomplish the aim they have in view—for whoever fought against God and prevailed?—they have yet power to raise a tempest of doubt in the soul of man; and, in return for all the blessings showered upon them by Almighty God, do their utmost to undermine and destroy that faith in Himself which He has implanted in mankind. There was a time when men of this class were rare to find—so rare that they were looked upon as monsters of their species. Now they have increased and multiplied, and pass under the name of men of science.

Then there is another class, who acknowledge the existence of God, but at the same time affirm that neither justice, nor mercy, nor providence belong to Him; and a third set, who, if they do not actively deny the truth of Christianity, show a passive and total indifference to it. They look upon religion as a sort of prejudice, hardly to be tolerated in primitive times, and now nothing but a refuge for those weak understandings who are incapable of following the march of science or of appreciating its marvellous triumphs. How, then, are we to meet and grapple with an evil so fatal in its consequences to every condition of humanity? The remedy I would propose is to seek for the sources of this evil, and this morning we will examine them together.

My brethren, what are the sources of unbelief? The first and foremost is *pride*. Pride which alienates man from God;

pride, which in the place of the worship of God puts the worship of self, and makes a man say: I acknowledge no other God; my heart is my own, I may pollute it as much as I please; my body is my own, and I may steep it in crime; my lips are my own, and I will use them to blaspheme. Religion is what I choose to make it; and as for the Creed and the Ten Commandments, and the ordinances of the Church, I will have none of them!

Pride is the moving spirit of this perverse and wicked doctrine, which must land us either in Pantheism or Rationalism; and we cannot wonder that pride should be so successful in hiding the truth from us, if it can so easily hide from us the knowledge of ourselves. I will not press this argument too far, for I do not say that unbelief cannot exist without pride; but that, if there were less pride, there would be less unbelief in the world. The unbeliever puts his own judgment in place of that submission which faith enjoins to the Word of God and the teaching of the Church; it is an excess of faith in himself which makes him wanting in faith towards God. Thus we see the connection between pride and blasphemy; the latter is but a logical consequence of the former.

Pride is, in fact, nothing less than the negation of God. Pride caused Satan and his angels to be cast out of Heaven. Pride was the origin of the disobedience of our first parents; it was pride prompted their wish to be equal to God in knowledge, so that they could not resist the voice of the tempter when he said: "Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." *

How totally opposite is the teaching of the Gospel, which tells us that the truths which are hid from man, in the pride of his wisdom, "shall be revealed unto babes." † It is impossible for a mind puffed up with its own wisdom clearly to discern the truth. In short, if pride prevents us from accepting the judgments of God, or acknowledging His chastishments, we must remain convinced that it is the never-failing source of error in

* Gen. iii. 5.

† St. Matt. xi. 25.

our lives ; and if it does not in every case prompt the open expression of unbelief, it is at the root of all insubordination to faith. The first suggestion of pride is to flatter our self-love by the supposition that we can understand everything. There is no doubt that it is not without considerable effort that the human mind consents to believe what it does not understand. But the wish to understand everything is by no means the indication of a great mind ; it is a pretension shunned by men of real intellect. It is the result of a limited knowledge, for, as Jules Simon truly said, it is only the little mind which aspires to explain and understand everything. It is mere folly on the part of the unbeliever to suppose that submission and docility are not compatible with intellectual attainments, and you may observe that the belief which he will withhold from the Gospel truth he will give to the first charlatan who comes in his way.

Self-love would make us depend solely upon ourselves, and therefore, in this mistaken conceit, the unbeliever looks upon the revealed truth of religion as useless. But this is not ministering to man's dignity, but to his pride. Man finds his equal in man, but in God's sight we are all children.

A third and last very characteristic form of pride is the mania for individuality. My brethren, there are actually men of such insufferable pride that they find it unendurable to speak or act as do others ; they must be by themselves apart. Men of this kind look upon themselves as removed far above their neighbours, and consequently they would consider it to be a degradation, a loss of consequence, if they believed in God and said their prayers like other men ! Purely from a love of singularity they will find fault with what others admire, they will despise what others revere. You will see them stand when others kneel, amuse themselves in some place of entertainment while others pray. The whole of their superior wisdom consists in keeping themselves apart from the rest of mankind, in order that everyone may see that they hold themselves to be superior to their fellows.

But the pretext they put forward is that others may suppose

them to see further than the common herd, and that, for them to become convinced Christians, far deeper and weightier motives are required than those which the world at large has been contented to accept hitherto. So powerful is this mania that, even if they were to fabricate a religion according to their fancy one day, they would, if they saw it likely to become common property, abandon it the next. Of the vanity and presumption of such men, the Holy Scriptures declare that, "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." *

Ignorance is another source of unbelief. My brethren, I do not intend to speak to you of men who have had no opportunities of instruction or education. I am not going to allude to the poor working man, who can do a creditable day's work; but who thinks that, because he can read a column of the newspaper, which perhaps he does not always fully understand, he has a right to give an opinion upon religion. I am not speaking of the young free-thinker, who, because he has learnt a smattering of arithmetic and history, and has skimmed the surface of metaphysics and chemistry, thinks he can apply himself to solve the most difficult problems of religion with the same confidence—I may say, with greater confidence—than if he were a second Newton or a second Pascal.

I am not thinking of the woman who, having read a few novels or so, and a few periodicals of the day, is ready to enter the arena of theological disputes. Such examples as these may provoke a compassionate smile, but are not worthy of a rebuke, other than the mild irony of Pascal: "If you wish to be an unbeliever, the wish (without the argument) alone will suffice."

No, I speak of the masters in science; and I ask those professors of knowledge, What do they know of the religion which they criticise with so much confidence, and dismiss with so much

* Rom. i., 21, 22.

contempt? Religion can now boast nineteen centuries of resistance to similar attacks—nineteen centuries of struggle and triumph. Its teaching is dispersed throughout the world. It can reckon among its followers—it can count amongst its champions—the noblest intellects of mankind. I would ask, then, these professors if they or their learning have discovered any way of disposing of the Divine origin of religion? Have they ever been able to explain away the prophecies which have been already fulfilled, and which still continue to be fulfilled from day to day?

If Jesus Christ be a fanatic and imposter, as they aver, how can they account for the effects produced upon the world by such an imposture—such fanaticism? How can they declare those miracles to be false which were attested even by the Jews who put Him to death, and by the Pagans who persecuted Him? How can they explain away the fact that, when the Roman Empire was at the zenith of its glory and fame, twelve poor fishermen were able to compel her citizens to worship as God One who had died a felon's death upon the Cross, or to impose the most severe system of morality upon the most corrupt nation in the world?

Can they explain how millions of martyrs came to shed their blood for a mere chimera? how Christianity won the victory over the forces of human reason, human power, and human passion? and how the gigantic efforts of heathen philosophy and heathen tyranny combined, were powerless to crush out or destroy the work of "the Carpenter" and twelve poor fishermen of Galilee? How can they get rid of the fact that time can leave no mark upon religion, which rejoices, now as ever, in exuberant life?

My brethren, do not look for any answer to these questions. The cavillers of religion are ignorant of its real nature, and must therefore misrepresent it before they open their attack. It was well said by St. Augustine: We first of all create a phantom, and then make war upon it. This is the approved method of those who know nothing of religion but, perhaps, some formula of the Catechism, soon learnt, and as soon forgotten, in their youth;

and from that time they have only studied the subject—if they have studied it at all—in the books which calumniate, not those which explain it.

There were once two people travelling together in a railway carriage—a man and a woman—and the woman began to make a parade of her disbelief in Christianity. “But have you made any study of religion?” her companion enquired. “Most certainly,” she replied: “I have read the Encyclopædia, and the works of Voltaire and Diderot.” “And Bossuet?—have you read his works also?” “No, indeed, I have never even heard of them.” “Then, madam, pardon me, but not having read the arguments for, as well as against religion, your profession is not one of unbelief, but of ignorance.” It was severe, but true.

I will grant that, in the ranks of unbelief, there are men who have made profound studies in human science; but they have been absorbed in these investigations, which have opened to them the way to riches and honour, till they have become perfectly indifferent to anything which lies beyond the range of human understanding. In this way they have lost sight of religion altogether, and have forgotten all knowledge of religious questions. Yet, by a strange perversion of intellect, they set themselves up as judges, and competent judges, of a faith which they have renounced! Why? Because ignorance, my brethren, is the mother of prejudice; and the less ground there is for prejudice, the more formidable it is. Hence it follows that the greater their ignorance the more they lay claim to their supposed right of judgment. A man who knows nothing of chemistry, does not give an opinion upon it, and diffidence in giving an opinion upon matters of which we are ignorant is one of the best instincts of our nature.

This may be accepted as a general rule; but to this rule religion—and religion only—is made the exception. The more profound the ignorance the more arbitrary is the opinion! Contrast the caution and diffidence with which the man of science will give his opinion upon a problem of human science, and the crude audacity of the young man who speaks in all the

confidence of ignorance upon religious matters. What does he care for the opinions of his forefathers, the authority of the Church, the weight of tradition, the testimony of the saints and doctors of the Church? "Nothing but superstition," he will answer, while he complacently imagines that all such luminaries as these must pale before the light of his own superior knowledge!

Side by side with ignorance, we will now place a smattering of knowledge. The really ignorant are not those who know nothing at all, but those who, being ignorant, pretend to know. This is the case with certain writers of the present day who cram their minds with surface knowledge—a mass of undigested facts from some encyclopædia—and then set up for universal wisdom, declaring themselves competent to decide upon every possible question; and their judgment is the worst of all. They have no real knowledge of religion. What they have is derived from some book, or some review, which substitutes sneer for argument, and brings forward with complacency sophisms which have already been a thousand times refuted. Hence the diffusion of the Atheistic literature, with its power of proselytising, to the furthest extremity of the globe, invading even the sanctuary of family life, where it seldom fails to find some who are incautious enough to admit it, and curious enough to read it, or perhaps some insidious accomplice prepared to take up the cudgels for it.

This is, without doubt, the greatest of all the dangers which menace religion; for never has there been so much written and published against morality and faith as in the present age—never have there been greater facilities for circulating these publications, even in the quietest country village, the most remote hamlet. It is, alas! the curse of the age, scattered broadcast over the earth, and more fatal in its results in our country than anywhere else; for Italians, as a rule, have—or think they have—quick perceptions and a swift intelligence, and those who do not happen to be particularly gifted in this way themselves are immediately ready to give the credit instead to the writer, as they hasten to bring their minds into conformity with his.

Do not think that writers are lacking in defence of the faith. The apology for the Christian religion has been stated over and over again, by men whose works are the finest in our language. But of what avails it? Who will prosecute such studies as these when any surface review will serve the purpose of attack? It is the old story of St. Paul on the Areopagus which repeats itself over and over again. The priests and ministers preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His merits, His laws, His promises of reward and punishment; and the indifferent are ever ready with the same answer which was made to St. Paul—"We will hear thee again of this matter." *

These self-styled enlightened understandings have no real knowledge of any one of the sciences, but a smattering of them all; and this smattering suffices to turn their heads, and alienate them from God, while they spend more effort in adhering to their unbelief than it would cost them to believe the truth.

We have touched upon one of the causes of unbelief, but there is yet another more potent still. Sometimes it would be possible to rescue the intellect from its wanderings, and bring it back to the path of truth, if it were not impeded by weakness of will and natural depravity of heart. Here are two formidable obstacles. Let us consider first the *weakness of will*.

This is a time when the impious boast of Atheism is everywhere to be heard, and the unbeliever is at liberty to pour vials of contempt upon religion and all who preach it. While pretending to advocate toleration and liberty for all, he deals his deadly blows at the heart of Christianity. These are not the days certainly when faith is convened before the tribunal of the tyrant; it is not dragged round the arena of the Roman circus to glut the eyes of the assembled multitude; it is subjected instead to the martyrdom of daily insult and scorn. "We are become an open shame unto our enemies; a very scorn and derision unto them that are round about us." †

There is no disguise made that, in this way, the scoffers against

* Acts xvii. 32.

† Psalm xliv. 13.

religion hope to sap its very foundations in the heart of man ; and it is much to expect that a weak character can make a stand against attacks of this nature. I have the greatest admiration for the young man who has held fast by his faith through the temptations of his early years. But, alas ! what new perils await him on his entry into the world. He sees piety turned into ridicule ; he sees the followers of religion accused of hypocrisy, as if there could be self-interest in the avowal of Christianity now, when the triumph of Atheism is so marked that the profession of unbelief is looked upon, in itself, as a sufficient diploma and the readiest way to obtain worldly honour and advantage.

In such circumstances as these, will the soldier of Christ “not be ashamed to profess the faith of Christ crucified” ? Will he have the courage to stand against the continued vaunts and scoffs of irreligion ? At first his own conscience will make him afraid to yield to them, but by degrees he will get more hardened, and he will end by being an unbeliever, not from conviction, but in deference to the world’s opinion.

I have known men who have thought that by defying God they can make up for their cowardice in the presence of the most ordinary representative of human authority. There are others who will not practise Christianity because Christianity is no longer the fashion, and thus sacrifice the inward conviction of their soul to this, the lowest form of ridicule. They are afraid to commit themselves to anything, and are ready to stifle every individual feeling at the bidding of that tyrant—as it is well described by Machiavelli—public opinion. Christians there are who, though not insensible to the voice of God, the counsels of religion, the warnings of conscience, yet dare not take heed to them on account of their pusillanimous fears, and whose lips, while they make the profession of unbelief, belie the real conviction of their souls. Listen to the words of one of the philosophers of the last century, as he lay upon his death-bed : “Attend to me,” he said to the bystanders—“attend to the lesson I am about to give you. I confess to you—I swear, by that God into Whose

Presence I am about to be summoned, and before Whom I shall be judged—that wherever, either in my speech or in my writings, I have appeared cold towards Christianity, it has been not from internal conviction, but from fear of men.”

Ah! how many are there now, who, if they were to cast off their mask of unbelief, and be honest with themselves, would hold the same language? Jouffroy observes that the reason there is such a lack of noble characters in the world is twofold—(1) want of principle; and (2) want of determination. Thus this abject fear of the world's opinion becomes a twice-told cowardice; for it prevents men, in the first instance, from having any principles of their own; and secondly, from having the energy of will to adhere to them.

How grievous it is to see a man sacrifice his eternal happiness to the fear of man's opinion. Oh! young men—you who speak so justly against oppression and tyranny—how can you become the slaves of those who would respect you a thousand times more if you had the courage to despise their scorn. You, who are in your hearts convinced of the truth, take courage, and cast off their galling yoke. For the sake, then, of that faith which you learnt at your mother's knee, have the courage of your convictions, and shake yourselves free from such unworthy thralldom; so shall the opinion of the world, instead of your master, become your slave.

But, my brethren, great as is the tyranny of public opinion, without the complicity of human passions, to which it never fails to appeal, it could not lead captive half as many victims—half as many slaves; for we must remember, on the other hand, that there is no virtue that is not enjoined, no vice that is not denounced, by Christianity. Christianity preaches steadily the doctrine of self-mortification. It courts self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice, and upon the patient endurance of these by the Christian depend his hopes of happiness, both here and hereafter. This is the chief complaint against religion: it is too hard, too severe. Could not the rule be relaxed a little, and the promises of future happiness, the joys of Heaven, be made possible also for

the proud man, the libertine, the oppressor of the poor and needy? Or, at least, if their conduct were allowed to pass without reproof, then the votaries of unbelief would be fewer in number.

“If you will but take away,” said an ex-Minister once of an ex-King, “if you will but take away *one* out of the Ten Commandments, we will profess your creed.” But religion is as inflexible as the truth, as the God of truth. Jesus Christ said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.”* You must either be a Christian according to the Gospel precepts, or not a Christian at all. That intemperate, sensuous man would be a Christian, if Christianity did not enjoin self-mortification and temperance; but rather than practise these, he prefers to question the truth of religion, when, in reality, the only fault of religion in his eyes is that it will not tolerate his unseemly conduct without reproof.

Again, look at that woman! Her one idea is dress and frivolity; home has no longer any attraction for her; her duties are irksome; so she plunges madly into the dissipations of the world, and tired of hearing the admonitions of religion, she thinks to escape from them by becoming an unbeliever. But, foolish woman, what have you gained by it? Will you be more secure of the respect and affections of your children?—of your husband’s confidence? Will your reputation be the more pure? Who is there who would trust a woman who is an unbeliever? Moral philosophy alone can offer no guarantee for her conduct.

Or we may take another example: the example of an ambitious man, who is eager for some post of honour. But in these unhappy times, piety and faith being looked upon with suspicion, he renounces both, and makes unbelief the cloak for his ambition; and this man will dare to accuse others of hypocrisy. Can there be a greater hypocrite than himself? Either, as a Christian, he was a hypocrite in the first instance, or, as an unbeliever, he is a hypocrite now.

Again, religion cannot away with avarice. So, when the

* St. Mark xiii. 31.

poor and needy appeal to the miser for charity, he replies : " Superstition and nonsense ! I am an unbeliever ; generosity is no virtue with unbelief. There is no occasion for an unbeliever to give away money in charity." Or another man may have increased his capital by some infamous speculation, which has brought others to ruin. The poor working man, the widow, whom he has robbed of their savings, besiege his door. Poor people, your efforts are all in vain ; the unbeliever will have no pity upon you ; it is only religion which, in case of injury, enjoins restitution.

There would, however, be no end to it, if I were to continue the list of the passions which avail themselves of the convenient cloak of unbelief. But from what I have said I think it is plain that unbelief does not result from science, but from the corruption of the times. It is the heart which is in fault, not the head ; and this assertion, by a woman of great ability, is very apt. Self-interested unbelief may hug itself in false security, thinking to escape the pangs of remorse ; but it will one day awake to despair, unless God should see fit to work a miracle of conversion. The unbeliever would leave off, he declares, his evil ways, could he be secure of the truth of the Christian faith ; and when religion has proved to him the truth of the Christian faith, he replies that he cannot renounce his way of life. When the heart is in error, it has its own reasons for declaring the truth to be a falsehood, and from the erring heart there arise clouds of error which confuse and puzzle the brain. When the heart is addicted to unlawful pleasures, the mind follows suit, and puts error in the place of truth to justify them ; and for those who wish to transgress the Commandments, it is an easy task first to forget the Creed.

With the unbeliever, his reasons for unbelief are only his passions under another name ; and Rousseau knew the human heart when he said, " Show me a man who has no interest in supposing the Gospel to be false, and he will believe it at once to be true. The sources of unbelief, then, are pride, ignorance, the fear of the world's opinion, and the human passions.

I have considered them separately, one by one ; but in reality

they are not to be divided, for they may all be combined in any one person, to settle him in his unbelief, and to make his condition more hopeless. I will not detain you any longer with their refutation, for common sense alone will finish the argument—common sense which dictated these words to a man of great depth of thought: “Just as, when it is a question of poetry, a man would take the opinion of other poets, lest he should make a mistake; so it is best to be guided by the opinion of the saints, in a matter of faith, if you would avoid making a mistake there also.”

Besides, there is one place where, whether we will or no, we must be prepared to meet truth face to face, and this is on our death-bed. Upon the bed of death we cannot escape from the decision as to the sincerity and truth of a doctrine. Upon the bed of death we must decide between the sincerity and truth of the Catholic faith or the sincerity and truth of Atheism.

I would ask yourselves, Have you ever seen a Christian in death's last agony deny his faith? Never! Not one. Whereas, instead, how many an unbeliever (and God be thanked for it), has pressed the Cross of Christ with dying lips, and fled for pardon to One Whose compassion, even at that last moment, will never fail us. What, then, is the inference which we must draw from this? First of all, we must never give up hope in the coming of Christ's Kingdom. In spite of the inundations of unbelief, the Church has lost no ground. The sun does not cease to shine because of the passing clouds.

Lacordaire tells us that the temporary darkening of a great mind is not always a symptom of evil. It may be that God has willed it, in order that He may come very near to it, and reveal His glory in its conversion, that man may be convinced that of himself he can do nothing, but that he owes everything to God. It is often the same with nations as with individuals; for instance, error will of itself fall to the ground, and the truth shines forth in its splendour. Then the fate of a nation becomes decisive when but two alternatives lie before it—either to surrender itself entirely to the side of faith, or to commit itself

for ever to the cause of unbelief. That is to say, will it choose to perish in ignominy or rather to triumph with the truth.

The past victories of Christianity are pledges of future triumphs; but in order that our hopes may not be vain we must raise our eyes to Heaven. Man may fulfil God's will, but he can do nothing of himself without the help of God. God, Who is the source of all truth, can alone give the truth to man, and with it the power to believe it. It is God alone who can besiege the heart of the unbeliever, and with gentle but irresistible force disclose the truth to him, and bid him open his eyes to the light as the wayside flower unfolds its blossoms to receive the rays of the sun.

Yet there is more: we must be jealous guardians, fearless defenders, and generous apostles of the faith which we have received from God. It is not enough to be a disciple of the faith, we must go on to teach it to others by personal exertion and the eloquence of living example. We must be Christians, not only in word but in deed, and to the very end of our lives so that we give no occasion for the scoff that our faith is not shown forth in our lives. This kind of eloquence is the most enlightening, the most convincing, the most persuasive of all.

“*Padre mio*” (father), a poor woman once said to a priest, “my husband is an unbeliever; how can I bring him back to the faith?” Pray to God, in faith; bear the trial with patience, and show your religion in gentleness and patience, so that he may never have to complain of you. Then he will begin to ask himself, Where does my wife get her goodness from? and being constrained to acknowledge that it is the result of the teaching of the Lord Jesus, Whom she worships, he will follow your example and worship Him also. After an interval of time the woman returned. “Father!” she cried, in a transport of joy, “your prophecy has come true, my husband has become a better Christian than myself.”

Have, then, faith in Jesus Christ, faith in His religion, faith in His kingdom; and in spite of this influx of infidelity, keep fast

hold of faith and hope. A day will dawn, and that not far distant, when blasphemy, negation, and unbelief must yield their place to truth; and, that your hopes may not be vain, lift up your heart in prayer to God.

Man must be endued with the grace of God if he would stem the tide of unbelief; he cannot do so in his own strength. But the prayer of faith will arm him with God's Own omnipotence. Therefore we must ever hope and pray—pray and hope. And that is not enough either; we must, I repeat, also labour. Religion, now as ever, enjoins that personal co-operation, that practice of religion, which I have described as the preaching of example.

A really Christian life is the best answer we can make to unbelief. Do not let the unbeliever have it in his power to say, Why do you wish us to profess your creed, if you, with all your religion and all your faith, are worse than ourselves? Alas! it is too often true. Pray, then, without ceasing; give alms of your goods; if ye suffer take it patiently; be consistently gentle and kind towards all men, speaking to them by the actions of your heart rather than by the words of your lips. Do not attempt sermons or exhortations to unbelievers; they will have none of them. In this way you will win them back to religion, and make them once more acceptable in the sight of God their Saviour.

Oh my God! do Thou put this Divine mission into the hearts of Thy people, so that the efforts of the unbeliever may be in vain. Bid Thy truth shine forth in its splendour, throughout the length and breadth of our land; set it in triumph on every brow, and let no cloud of earthly passion or pride, or fear of the world's scorn, have power to obscure its light. Scatter and disperse every craven fear, and fill us with courage and holy freedom.

Oh! Jesu, Thou Who art indeed the Light of the World, hide not Thy face from us, lest the dark clouds now gathering upon the mountain tops descend, and obscure the faith which Thou camest down from Heaven to give unto the world. Abide with us now, as Thou didst with the disciples at Emmaus, whose eyes were holden until Thou didst make Thyself known to

them in the breaking of bread; that last and infinite Mystery of Thy love. Oh! Jesu, Thou Who art the Sun of Righteousness, arise with healing in Thy wings. Oh! Thou Dayspring from on high, visit us once more, "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace." *

* St. Luke i. 79



IV.

THE CHRIST OF HISTORY.

MY BRETHREN,—If there is one thing more important than another in the opinion of this century, it is the pursuit of science. All engage, or at least all desire to engage, in the eager race. Proficiency in science is the present boast; will it be the future glory of the age? Nevertheless, in the midst of all this fervour, there is one science which is entirely neglected, although it is the most necessary to us of all—the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is necessary, firstly, because it is the foundation of all knowledge; secondly, because it contains the solution of every problem of human science.

Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Light which lightens every man that cometh into the world, be he wise or simple. Every principle of truth—moral, civil, or religious—throughout all ages is centred in Him. He is the source of all inspiration, whether it be of science or of art. The noblest intellects of mankind find their highest development—the culmination of all their labours—in Jesus Christ. To Him, as an arrow to its mark, flies every generous affection of the heart, every heroic action of the soul. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end of the great scheme of Creation. In Jesus Christ, as in a book, the pages of human destiny are written, and day by day unrolled.

As each one has his own individual life, so the world which denies Christ pursues its own method of science, ever labouring to sap the foundations of faith. But the followers of Christ are possessed of the highest form of science—a science which holds the key of all human knowledge; for faith and reason, having both their origin with God, must agree upon one truth.

The world which denies Christ has its own system of morality, which acknowledges no rule or principle beyond the

gross instincts of our fallen nature. The followers of Christ have their system of morality—the system preached by Christ Himself.

The world which denies Christ has its own system of politics, which is simple, clear, and well defined: the exclusion of Christ from the laws of the land, from social intercourse, from the schools of instruction, from the affairs of the State; and, if possible, to confine His influence within the actual walls of the Church. The followers of Christ have their system of policy also, clear and well defined; and it consists in affirming that, unless inspired by Christ, the social welfare of all Christian nations must perish and decay.

Finally, the world which denies Christ has at its command a formidable armed force. It has the power of framing laws adverse to the Christian religion. It has the strength of numbers, the popular clamour ready to burst out now, as on the Mount of Calvary, with the awful cry: “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” The followers of Christ call to mind their Master’s words: “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”* “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”† “Verily, I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”‡ So that there are two very distinct parties in the world, and between these two the great Sign of “division” is Jesus Christ.§ And the reason is that the world does not know Jesus Christ. If it did know Him, it could not fail to be drawn towards Him; it could not fail to love Him; indeed, it must end by a complete surrender to the constraining love of Christ. St. Paul says that in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”|| and therein his own marvellous intellect found satisfaction and rest.

* St. Luke xii. 32.

† St. John xvi. 33.

‡ St. Matt. xvii. 20.

§ St. Luke xii. 51.—“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.”

|| Col. ii. 3.

St. Bonaventura, in reply to the questions of the philosophers as to where he found the solution of the most arduous scientific problems, replied that he resolved them by the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Sweet it is, in the silent watches of the night, to gaze, rapt in wonder, into the starry firmament, and meditate upon the hidden, changeless harmony of the revolving spheres. Sweet it is, after long and patient thought, to trace the story of life to its source in the inner chamber of the heart of man. Sweet it is to find, in the solution of a scientific problem, a reward for hours of deep unwearied thought. Sweet it is, after years of labour, to hold within our grasp the key to literature. But sweeter beyond all comparison than these is the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine, who was perhaps the greatest genius that the world has ever seen, took delight in every science; but, from the moment that the knowledge of Jesus Christ was revealed to him, he declared that henceforward every other science had lost its attraction for him, and that in the pursuit of that alone there was neither weariness nor satiety. We have indeed an earnest of the future life, our conversation in Heaven, while on earth, if we think and speak of Jesus Christ—if we love and serve Him; for what is life eternal but to “know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent”? Let us then strive to obtain the knowledge of Jesus Christ; this is the question of vital importance—this is the natural climax to which all my previous sermons tend.

After we have become convinced of the existence of God, of the spirituality of the soul, of the necessity of religion,* because the relationship between God and man have their sole foundation in religion†—that as there is only one God, so there can be but one true religion—it now becomes our business to determine which is the true religion; and if we can prove that Jesus Christ is God, it follows that the religion of Jesus Christ must be of Divine origin.

* Sermon iii. “God” (pp. 14-26). Sermons iv., v., vi. “The Soul” (pp. 26-49). First Series.

† See pp. 1-17, Second Series. “The Necessity of Religion.” Sermon i.

Let us then, my brethren, apply ourselves to this science, for the evils of the present day are a direct result of ignorance upon this point. Ignorance of Jesus Christ is the characteristic of the present age. If Christians had a better knowledge of their Lord, the reign of selfishness would give place to the reign of love upon earth—love which can of itself make earthly happiness a type of heavenly joy. Who, then, is the Lord Jesus Christ? If we would know indeed who the Lord Jesus is, we must study what has been revealed to us of His life.

Tertullian tells us that in the beginning of all things God was only known to His creatures as the God of Wisdom and the God of Love. Fear had no existence—there was no place for it—and all creation joined in one hymn, the hymn of gratitude to God. By their rebellion, both angels and men fixed between God and man a gulf of misery and woe. Heaven and earth beheld and trembled before that awful moment of the wrath of God—wrath which had taken the place of love. There was silence in Heaven, and then Lucifer and his bad angels were cast out of Heaven into the abyss. Upon Adam and Eve, less guilty in their act of disobedience than the bad angels, the decree of Divine justice fell with less inexorable severity. The terrible words: "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life," were addressed to the serpent and not to them; and they had this consolation vouchsafed to them: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."*

God can bring good out of evil. As the woman Eve brought evil into the world, so shall a pure Virgin be the channel of its salvation. Adam and Eve went forth from the garden of Eden with God's promise to them, and their faith in that promise, that out of their seed should arise a Saviour of the world, to deliver both themselves and every descendant of their race.

* Gen. iii. 14, 15.

And this faith in a Divine Deliverer underlies every form of religion and tradition amongst men. These traditions are overlaid and corrupted by gross and even grotesque errors; but having been once kindled by the light of prophecy, you will never find them entirely extinct from the human mind. For the Eastern nations the tradition was preserved in the inspired words of the prophecy of Balaam.* Greece raised an Altar to the Unknown God. Rome listened with astonishment to the prophecy of Virgil, as to the Child born of a Virgin who would inaugurate a new era for the world. Some glimmer of the Divine Light penetrated even into the heart of the darkest forest of Germany, and found its way to the farthest ocean isle; and lest those rays should be lost, or become extinguished in the dense atmosphere of Paganism, there were God's own people, chosen out of all the nations of the world, and led by Him from one country to another—from "one kingdom to another people"; to teach the world the marvels of a past, and the secrets of a future age—to prepare the way for Jesus Christ.

There lay the mission of that great people—the reason of their history and existence. From the very beginning, in order to meet the genius of the Eastern nations, there are constant types of Jesus Christ. The type you know is a mark of Divine superiority. The devil has succeeded in counterfeiting prophecies and miracles, but in no way has he ever been able to counterfeit types. There have been examples of men in history whose coming has been foretold—Alexander, Cyrus, St. John the Baptist—but they were not prefigured by types.

"But with regard to Jesus Christ"—so wrote St. Thomas Aquinas—"the whole history of the Jews is nothing but an unbroken series of events and types, all foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah"; and he concludes, with St. Augustine: "The ark of Noah; the rod of Moses; the stone cut out without hands, which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth; † the veil of the temple; ‡ the Paschal Lamb, to be 'eaten in haste

* Numbers xxiv. 17.

† Daniel ii. 31, 35.

‡ St. Matt. xxvii. 51.

with the loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand"—are not all these types of the expected Messiah?"

Then, among the great characters of sacred history, is there one which is not a type, in some form or other, of Jesus Christ? Abel, slain by his brother Cain; Noah, who saves the human race from perishing by water; Melchizedek, priest of the Most High; Isaac, ascending the mountain bearing the wood for his own sacrifice; Joseph, sold by his brethren, and then rescuing them from death; Moses, delivering the people from the bondage of Egypt—are not these so many types and figures of the Saviour? Does not Solomon represent His wisdom? Does not the man of the land of Uz, whose name was Job, in his afflictions and patience led our thoughts to Calvary? While in Jonah we have the type of the Resurrection.

In accordance with the types are the prophecies of Holy Scripture. Prophecy is the power to foretell with certainty the future. From whom can prophecy proceed but from God, to Whom past and future alike are present? One single prophecy would have sufficed to prove the truth. If God had raised up one single Prophet, whether he had been David or Isaiah, it would have mattered little; but, as Pascal says, "that he should have foreshadowed with certainty the coming of the Messiah," would have constituted in itself an overwhelming weight of evidence. But God the Father willed that the Divine Figure of His Son should be portrayed, not by one person only, but by a multitudinous testimony, that all might know that it was God Who inspired the Prophets, Who guided their writings, and Who alone, possessing the secret knowledge of that wondrous Figure of Christ, could call it up in every age, and under every condition of humanity.

Oh! my brethren, here is indeed a wonderful subject, one of surpassing interest—this contemplation of the coming of the Messiah! It is the most interesting, the most wonderful of all the subjects of contemplation that can occupy the mind of man.

* Exodus xii. 11, 12.

Observe the first indication of this vast design—the outline of the great picture which will become so striking in its likeness as to leave no doubt of the nature of the person it would set forth before our eyes.

This first indication is to be found in the passage from the Book of Genesis I have already cited :

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*

This passage represents the anatomy of the scheme of redemption. The next trait appears in God’s command to Abraham :

“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee : and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing.

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” †

In fact, throughout, the Figure of the Redeemer never loses any of its august character ; for He never appears as the Redeemer of one man only, but of all mankind ; never as the Redeemer of one nation, but of all the nations of the earth. This promise is carried on to Isaac. Isaac is driven by famine into the land of the Philistines ; the Lord appears to him, to to preserve from all the seductions of Egypt this chosen representative of Abraham’s faith. He recalls to him the great promises made to his family. “Go not down into Egypt ; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of : sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee ; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father ; . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. ‡

Isaac has two sons, Esau and Jacob, and the same promise

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Gen. xii. 1-3.

‡ Gen. xxvi. 2-4.

is handed on to Jacob. Then Jacob has the vision of the heavenly ladder, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and he hears the voice of the Lord, saying: "Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." *

Jacob has twelve sons: which will be chosen from among them to give birth to the Saviour of the world? Jacob is on his death-bed, and his sons are gathered round. The word of the Lord is on the lips of Jacob; and the holy old man, about to cross the threshold of eternity, indicates Judah, and hails him as the one chosen from among his brethren, of whose race shall come the Redeemer of the world: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. . . . The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." †

But which out of all the families of the tribe of Judah shall give birth to the Messiah? Isaiah tells us: "And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." ‡ Jesse is the father of David; the Blessed Virgin is of the House of David. And now listen to Isaiah's astounding prophecies of the Incarnation: "I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Isaiah xlii. 1). "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse which shall stand for an Ensign of the people; to It shall the Gentiles seek" (Isaiah xi. 10). "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah vii. 14). And again: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah ix. 6).

* Gen. xxviii. 14.

† Gen. xlix. 8-10.

‡ Isaiah xi. 1.

The human genealogy, then, of the Lord Jesus, as foretold by the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, has been traced from the seed of the woman, who had sinned by disobedience, to the Virgin Mary, the handmaid of the Lord. Now, *where* shall Christ the Messiah be born? *Where* shall be the cradle of the "*Desire of all Nations.*"* Perhaps at Rome, the capital of the world; perhaps at Jerusalem, the capital of the chosen people. Listen to what was foretold by the Prophet Micah 700 years beforehand: "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the cities of Judah, for out of thee shall come out a Governor, who shall rule My people Israel." When will He come? Listen once more, and the Lord will tell you by the mouth of the Prophet Haggai. Jacob has told us that the sceptre shall not depart out of Judah till Shiloh come. Haggai fills up that prophecy by fixing the epoch when the priesthood shall depart from the House of Aaron. Daniel gives the exact period of the time of the coming of the Messiah (Daniel ix. 24). Malachi warns us that "the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant ye delight in. Behold He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Malachi iii. 1).

Now, I ask you, my brethren, when we reflect upon all this, does it not fill us with wonder and amazement? But hitherto we have only seen the outline; now let us look at the colouring of the picture. His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection—even the circumstances of His betrayal and sacrifice—the Prophets have foreseen and foretold all. He will be worshipped by the Eastern Kings—they will bring Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh; He will be poor from His youth up, and toil as the Son of a carpenter, but His kingdom shall extend even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Listen to the description of His ministry: "A bruised reed shall He not break, the smoking flax shall He not quench."† The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him to preach good tidings to

* Haggai ii. 6, 7.

† Isaiah xlii. 3.

the meek. "He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."* "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness" (Isaiah xxix. 18). "Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see" (xlii. 18.)

Would you hear the Prophet foretell the story of His Passion? In very truth "Himself took our infirmities" (St. Matt. viii. 17). "He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. He hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah liii. 2, 35). "A Worm and no man, a very Scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. What are these wounds in Thine hands? Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends" (Zech. xiii. 6). "They pierced My hands and My feet; I may tell all My bones, they stand staring and looking upon Me. Many oxen are come about Me, fat bulls of Basan close Me in on every side. They gape upon Me with their mouths, as it were a ramping and a roaring lion" (Ps. xxii. 12, 13, 17).

These are some of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and I ask you, have they not been fulfilled, even in the minutest circumstances? The Evangelists relate them to us, but the Prophets had written their relation of the same facts centuries beforehand.

Now let us consider the nature of Christ's kingdom.

"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord;

"And shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears:

"But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the

* Isaiah lxi. ; St. Luke iv.

earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.

“And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

“And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

“And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den.

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”*

And here is the final touch, which puts the crown to the vast edifice—the distinct prophecy as to the Holy Eucharist, that continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ: “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.”†

Are we not now ready to exclaim: What a perfect combination of evidence, which unites in one marvellous whole, and forms one living picture? How is it possible not to recognise the hand of the Lord, not to perceive that it is His work? If you believe in the Bible, there is the evidence by itself that Jesus Christ is God. What can be urged in disproof of this general concourse of testimony which hundreds of years previously foretold the coming of Christ? Will you say that the Prophets had an agreement among themselves? But the epochs of the prophecies are different, and far removed from each other, so that objection falls at once to the ground.

Perhaps a doubt might be suggested as to the authenticity of

* Isaiah xi. 2-9.

† Malachi. i. 11.

their prophecies? But they were generally known and accepted long before the coming of the Messiah; and to remove any shadow of doubt, by providential forethought the Old Testament was translated into Greek three hundred years before the coming of the Messiah, and the Septuagint remains as a lasting witness, not to be called in question, of their truth. Or someone might say that these prophecies may be attributed to chance, or some happy accident? But the multiplicity and minute attendant circumstances of the events which were foreshadowed, the perfect agreement of testimony is such that it cannot possibly be the fruit of man's calculation, and can only be attributed to the wisdom of God.

Were these prophecies all fulfilled in Jesus Christ? You have only to refer to the Gospels, and you cannot doubt any further. We have admitted the authenticity of the prophecies, and after comparing them with the Gospel narrative we find them so precise and accurate in every particular, that it is difficult to believe they were written before, and not after, the events they foretell, or to say which is the page of prophecy and which the Gospel narrative.

The Apostles, in preaching to the Jews, appealed again and again to the witness of the Prophets. "To Him give all the Prophets witness," * St. Peter boldly declares. And again: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 St. Peter i. 21). St. Paul spent hours of close argument in proving from prophecy the Divinity of Christ; and our Saviour comforted his disciples by reminding them of the prophecies which must be fulfilled in Himself.

But someone may say: "The Prophets announced the coming of a King—the King of Glory." Yes, but they had also foretold His sufferings, His shameful death upon the Cross, by which He overcame death, and now ever liveth, sitting on the right hand of the Father, to make intercession for us.

* Acts x. 39.

What diadem of earthly monarch can equal the glory of His crown of thorns? What conqueror's triumph can be compared to the victory of His patience? What earthly kingdom is there that is equal either in extent or duration to that of Christ in the heart of man? "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." *

Again, it is objected, the Jews did not acknowledge Him. But this, far from making against the truth of the Divinity of Christ, is only another witness in its favour; for not only was their rejection of the Saviour foretold; it was also foretold that the punishment of their blindness would be their subsequent dispersion throughout the world—a fact which remains to this day, and of which each one of us may be an eye-witness.

Oh! my God, Thou Who didst put Thy word into the mouth of the Prophets, to prepare the hearts of Thy people for the coming of Thy Son our Saviour: grant us, who have now seen His Image foreshadowed in their inspired writings, perfectly to know Him Whom truly to know is everlasting life, and to love Him with heart and soul.

But, alas! it is now as it was when Jesus uttered those last words upon the Cross: "It is finished!" That awful scene repeats itself throughout the story of humanity. Now, as then, the world at the foot of the Cross is divided into two classes of persons. There are those that "pass by," reviling Him, mocking, blaspheming; there are others who stand now, as the holy women and the beloved disciple stood then, "by the Cross of Jesus," to catch the echoes of such amazing, such Divine love, and carry down to future ages of the world the story of the love of Christ.

This is a true picture of the spectacle which meets our gaze every day. There are many who love Christ their Saviour; there are also many who are ready to cry, with the Jewish multitude, "Away with Him!" and who argue thus: "We are content

* Isaiah xlv. 22.

with ourselves as we are; the Incarnation is nothing to us, because we do not wish for redemption. A favour cannot be forced upon those who do not wish to receive it, and we will have none of this favour."

My brethren, listen to me. God came down to earth from Heaven for us men, and for our salvation. He took our nature upon Him. For thirty-three years He lived upon this earth; He went about doing good, healing the sick, raising the dead. Yet more, for our sakes He suffered the scorn and blasphemy of men—insult, pain and shame, the scourge, the crown of thorns. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death—even the death of the Cross. All this for us; and can we reject and despise Him, as did the Jews of old?

Oh! my brethren, believe me, no man can with impunity afford to despise the love of God. When God opens to us the door of salvation we cannot refuse to see it, or to say to God that we know Him not. St. Paul is utterly unable to comprehend this wilful blindness: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"*

Man may try his utmost to shut himself up in his own nature, and say: "Peradventure the darkness shall cover me." There will come a ray of Divine light from Heaven which will turn his night into day. Jesus Christ is our Star, our Sun. There is no star without a satellite, no sun without attendant planets. Jesus Christ is God and Man, and man must therefore naturally tend towards Christ, Who is his Life, the Centre of his hope of immortality.

What then must be the fate of the man who thwarts this natural tendency, and refuses to be drawn towards Christ? Nothing less than the fate of the satellite if it tried to detach itself from the star, or the planet if it sought to wander away from the solar influence.

* Gal. iii. 1.

My brethren, we have seen that humanity must flee for refuge to seek Christ; must be drawn to Him; must ever abide with Him. All the prophecies which went before His coming are summed up in these words of St. Paul: "For He must reign." Yes, Christ must reign. He must reign, moreover, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.*

The reign of Christ is a vital necessity to all created things in Heaven and earth; the Creation cannot do without Him. This is a fact which cannot be put aside. For nineteen centuries Satan has endeavoured to prove to the world that St. Paul's statement is false. What has been the result? Cast one glance over the history of the world, and what do you find? History points to the ruins of imperial despotism—of constitutions which made a fairer show of duration—all swept away like cobwebs before the wind. It records the success of some earthly sovereign carried to the throne by popular suffrage and popular opinion—"I went by, and lo, he was gone: I sought him, but his place could no where be found." †

Oh! my brethren, "why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed. He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision." ‡ Yet even now there are men undaunted by the weight of history, the experience of ages. If they were here before me now, I would ask them a simple question: Is Christ God or man?

If Christ is, as you say, only man, then His work is the work of a man, and you can afford to let it alone; for as it is admitted to be very old, it must very soon share the lot of all mortal things and perish. But if Christ indeed be God, then His kingdom is the work of God, and you had better be wise in time, and look to your own credit; for it will not be earthly clamour or earthly anathemas that will destroy it. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I

* 1 Cor. xv. 25.

† Psalm xxxvii. 37.

‡ Psalm ii. 1, 2.

work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you." *

It is now 2,500 years ago since Isaiah prophesied the destruction of the nations who would not serve Christ; and 1,800 years ago St. Paul prophesied that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is God, to the glory of God the Father. What is this, if it is not the fulfilment of David's word: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.'" In this way the Old Testament fills up what is lacking in the New, the New Testament confirms the Old, and the course of centuries transforms prophecy into history.

Nor are the centuries without speech and language of their own, to bear witness to the truth. Take the first three centuries, and there you find the Apostles and Saints of God holy men like Timothy and Titus, and their faithful disciples. All these fall down before Christ and worship Him, saying:

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ:

Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.

Then follow the fourth and fifth centuries, with Constantine the Emperor, the learned Fathers of the Church—those who wrote the Apology for the Faith—and they take up the hymn of praise:

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ:

Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.

Throughout the centuries which succeed, during the iron age of the barbarians, as they rush one upon the heels of the other to complete the destruction of Imperial Rome, the monks preserve in their monasteries the strain of praise, to burst forth again in the Middle Ages in many a noble cathedral; or from the long train of crusading warriors as they pass to the Holy Sepulchre, there to bend the knee in adoration, proclaiming by their lives and in their deaths the triumphant fact:

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ:

Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.

In like manner the sixteenth century, with its revolutions, its schisms, its wars, its disasters, its great and noble saints; the seventeenth, with its scientific discoveries, its philosophy; even the eighteenth, with its load of carnage and crime—all pass beneath the all-seeing gaze of Christ; all bring their tribute of praise to His footstool, and in some form or another acknowledge Him to be the Lord.

Finally, the nineteenth century, which dawned upon war and tumult, and the heated passions of men; but which is closing in cynical indifference. Look at it well as it moves onwards with its great armaments and vast armies, its fields of battle, its inventions and discoveries, and mark that, whether it will or no, it bears witness to the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

How many more centuries there will be, I know not; but this I know: that “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy Hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.”*

The kingdom of Christ is without end, and so long as the centuries succeed each other, so long as the sun shines in the heavens, the followers of Jesus Christ will take up the eternal strain:

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ:
Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.

* Psalm cii. 25-27.

V.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

MY BRETHREN,—We have seen that man, the crown of all creation, the last and noblest work of the love and omnipotence of God, was made in original righteousness and innocence “very good.” Tradition, the Holy Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, all vouch for this truth. But very soon man abused the greatest of all the great gifts he had received from God—the gift of free-will. By disobedience he lost his original righteousness, and, falling into sin, disturbed the relationships between the creature and the Creator. Hence the source of original sin.

Since the beginning of the world, simultaneously with the Fall of man, there was the Divine promise of a Deliverer; and throughout all the ages of the world God sustained, by type and prophecy, the faith of mankind in His promise. So that we find the traditional dogma of the Redemption of the world preserved in some form or another—sometimes obscured by gross errors, but still preserved as a fact—among all the nations of the earth. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, the twelve Patriarchs, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Melchizedek are, under the Old Dispensation, so many living types of the Messiah—the Desire of all nations. The word of prophecy is on the lips, now of one, and now of the other, to keep alive the faith of mankind in the promised Saviour—to bear witness to Him.

David, in the Psalms, tells us of His Godhead with the Father from everlasting to everlasting; foretells His sufferings upon earth, His triumph over sin and death. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel take up the wondrous story, and give, with inspired precision, the time and place of His birth upon earth, His life, His sufferings, death upon the Cross, His future glory, His kingdom without end. Thus long beforehand did God

prepare men's minds for the knowledge of their Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord.

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, by the Prophet, saying :

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”*

“Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it.”†

All this we saw yesterday, as we followed through the Old Testament the wonderful biography of Christ. Let us now turn to the Gospels, and their study will so fill our hearts with wonder and love, that when we close them we shall be ready to exclaim, with St. Thomas, “My Lord and my God!”

Who, then, is Jesus Christ? I refer to the Gospels, and I gather from them that Christ is God and Man: God, of the substance of His Father, begotten before the world; Man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect Man. Listen to the opening of St. John's Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”‡

It is impossible to state more plainly the Incarnation of Jesus Christ our Lord: “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.”§ This was the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was no figure of speech, nor was the Child

* St. Matt. i. 22, 23.

† Isaiah xlv. 8.

‡ St. John i. 1-14.

§ St. Luke i. 31, 32.

Whose marvellous birth was then foretold, to be any child of adoption. "He was God, of the substance of His Father, begotten before the world; and Man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world."

St. Paul tells us that God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, "Who being the Brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3). And again, in still more explicit terms: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Heb. i. 5).

Here, then, is the declaration of His Divine nature: the only begotten Son of God. Therefore Christ is God, for the light of God's countenance is from everlasting—light which had no beginning, which will have no end—and the Son, being the brightness of the Father's glory, must therefore be eternal also. Just as the ray of light derives its origin from the sun, and cannot detach itself from it, so the only begotten Son of the Father is one with the Father. "The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten." But Christ is not only God, but Man also. St. Matthew, St. Luke, have given us His human genealogy, and have carried it back from the Tribe of Judah to David, from David to Jacob, from Jacob to Isaac, from Isaac to Abraham, and through an uninterrupted series of patriarchs to the first man. Truly, then, is Christ "the Son of Man" also.

St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gospel of God, writes: "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power." And, in another place, to emphasise the fulfilment of the promise as to the "Seed of the woman," "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." How many errors are forestalled by this direct statement—these few simple words: "made of a woman"! This was the answer to the heretics who, in after ages, might choose to say that the mother of Jesus was not the mother of God; or to others who might declare that the

generation of Jesus Christ had been that of other men. But we all know that, in the language of the Creed, "He was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary."

Now let us see how the Divine and human are for ever manifest to us in One, "Who, although He be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ." Let us begin with His birth. It was His Divine will that this should take place in utter neglect, in the manger of a lowly stable, because there was "no room" for the holy family in the inn. Can you deny that? Such might have been the birth of the lowliest among the children of men! But on the other hand we have the whole multitude of the heavenly host who proclaim His birth, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men"; the star which appears to guide the way to His cradle, where shepherds and kings, Jews and Gentiles fall down and worship Him;* and the trouble of Herod disguised under the veil of hypocritical respect.

Do not these things declare that it is not the ordinary birth of a man into the world, but that God has come down from Heaven to take our nature upon Him? Forty days after His birth, He is presented in the Temple, and an offering of turtle doves is made for Him; this is the appointed offering for the son of a poor man. But holy Simeon, "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," "to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost, "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ," took Him up in his arms, and blessed Him, as the Salvation of God, the Light to lighten the Gentiles, the Glory of Thy people Israel, † proclaiming Him thus to be the Son of God. His life threatened by Herod, the Infant Christ is taken by His parents into Egypt. This flight is human—man's resource in the hour of peril; but the Angel, who appears to warn Joseph of the danger, just as he had bidden the Magi depart into their country another way, ‡ proves that the journey is made by the Son of God.

Day by day He increases in wisdom and stature; this is the

* St. Matt. ii. 9.

† St. Luke ii. 30-32.

‡ St. Matt. ii. 12, 13.

gradual development of a man. But at twelve years old He is found in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; and all that heard Him were astonished at His answers.* Here is the wisdom of God. Mary and Joseph approach Him in silent amazement, till at length His mother saith unto Him: "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."† In His human nature He is liable to the gentle reproach of the question; but the Divine nature appears in the answer: "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" showing that Jesus acknowledges no other Father than God. The business of His Heavenly Father is His; His Father's house, which He will one day purge from profanity, His also.

But meanwhile we read that He went down with them (Mary and Joseph) to Nazareth, and was subject to them. He comes to the banks of the river Jordan to be baptized of John; and we see Him as Man humbling Himself to seek the Baptism of Repentance. But the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him like a dove, and it is the Voice of God which says: "This is My beloved Son"; and we are convinced that He is the Son of God. He is led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, that He may be tempted of the devil; for as man He is subject to temptation. But Satan is overcome by Him and put to flight, and we acknowledge Him as God.

"Again, as Man, He is "an hungered," but angels minister to Him because He is God. He falls asleep on the vessel in the midst of a storm. His human nature is in need of repose. He awakes and rebukes the winds and the waves, and there is a great calm; and the men marvel, saying: "What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"‡

As Man, He "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." As God, He heals them all. "The blind receive

* St. Luke ii. 46, 47.

† St. Luke ii. 48.

‡ St. Matt viii. 27.

their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them" * The Son of Man, in His self-chosen poverty and humiliation, hath not where to lay His head; but with a few loaves and two small fishes He feeds the multitude in the wilderness, and we behold the abundant riches and providence of God. His life threatened, He withdraws for a time from His enemies, and hides Himself: this is human fear. He casts out the evil spirits who become subject unto Him, and reveals the power of God. Before the tomb of Lazarus He wept the tears of humanity; but at His word, "Lazarus, come forth," death yields up his prey, and we behold the almighty power of God.

He is called the Son of Man, and as such knows hunger and thirst, pain and weariness. But His own words—"I and My Father are One"—proclaim his equal Godhead with the Father. The Jews accuse Him of blasphemy, but Moses and Elias appear to Him in His glorious Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, to bear witness to the truth of His words.

At the Last Supper He washes the feet of His disciples, humbling Himself as Man. But in the institution of the Holy Communion, the bread and wine become at His word His Body and Blood, the Mystical Food of the soul; and we adore in silent wonder the mystery of the love and wisdom and omnipotence of God.

Alone in the garden of Gethsemane, His disciples unable to watch with Him even one hour, His agony is so great that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"; † and here we contemplate the extremity of human suffering. The band of men and officers approach to seize Him. He goes forth to meet them. "Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward,

* St. Matt. xi. 5.

† St. Luke xxii. 41.

and fell to the ground.”* This is nothing less than the awful Majesty of God.

We follow Him to the judgment seat. We see Him clad in a purple robe, His head crowned with thorns, a reed in His hands. There are the chief priests and the scribes, who stand and vehemently accuse Him; the multitude instant with loud voices requiring that He might be crucified. Here is humanity in its utmost strait! But with unmoved calm He speaks to Pilate of truth: “Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice.” He turns to cast one look upon the Apostle who had denied Him, and St. Peter went out and wept bitterly. “I have sinned,” said the traitor Judas, “in that I have betrayed the innocent blood,” and went out and hanged himself. And here is evidence of the Divine nature, “Whose power no creature is able to resist, to whom it belongeth justly to punish sinners, and to be merciful to them that truly repent.”

The chief priests and scribes, and the whole multitude have dragged Him before the judgment seat, to be as Man pronounced guilty of death; but not one of the judges dares to give the sentence, because He is the Son of God.

Lastly, when He is on the Cross, His enemies pass by wagging their heads and insulting the last agonies of His human nature, till, as Man, he yields up the ghost. But the sun is darkened in the mid-heaven, the earth quakes, the rocks are rent, the veil of the Temple is rent in twain, and like the centurion, we are compelled to exclaim, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Now we have seen how the Divine and human nature of our Saviour manifest themselves side by side throughout His life upon earth. He is very God in His omnipotence; He is very Man in His sufferings—in His obedience to death. How is it possible to account for these contrasts in the life of Christ? The only explanation is this: Christ is God and Man, and it is not possible to sever the two natures, which are “One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person. For as

* St. John xviii. 4-6.

the reasonable soul and flesh is one man : so God and Man is one Christ." Finally, as Man, He is laid in the sepulchre ; as God the pains of death are loosed, because " it was not possible that He could be holden of it." *

Let us pause to consider this great miracle—the culminating proof of the Divinity of Christ, the corner stone of Christianity. Christ Himself in foretelling His Resurrection from the dead, brought it forward as the most incontrovertible sign of His Divine mission. St. Paul does not fear to tell us that " if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins." † The enemies of Christ at the time of His Crucifixion, and the enemies of Christianity ever since, have not failed to recognise that the fact of the Resurrection, if established, carries with it an overwhelming testimony to the Divinity of Christ. That was why the chief priests and scribes sealed the stone and set a watch, lest His disciples should come by night and steal Him away, and " say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first." ‡ That is why, throughout the succeeding centuries, the enemies of Christianity have left no means untried in their endeavour to destroy the evidence of this most capital truth.

There is no doubt that on one side it is a matter of vital necessity to prove it to be an undeniable fact. Let us proceed step by step. Two points will suffice to prove it. First, that Christ was really dead when He was laid in the sepulchre. Secondly, that He came forth from it in undoubted, evident life. First, then, was Christ really dead ? The Evangelists each in turn, and St. John, the eye witness of the death, § leave no room for any manner of doubt upon the subject.

" Jesus, when He had cried with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost" ||

* Acts ii. 24.

† 1 Cor. xv. 17.

‡ St. Matt. xxvii. 64.

§ " And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe " (St. John xix. 35).

|| St. Matt. xxvii. 50.

“ And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.” *

“ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.” †

“ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His Head, and gave up the ghost.” ‡

Moreover, if we allow ourselves to reason upon it, we can have no doubt that it must have been so, when we consider the awful nature of the sufferings which the Saviour had endured before He was nailed to the Cross. The only marvel is, that He could have hung there in life for three mortal hours. The historian Josephus testifies that crucifixion itself was sufficient to produce death; and therefore, as we read in the Gospel narrative, when the soldiers “ came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs.” §

But, as if to place the fact for ever beyond the reach of doubt, the narrative goes on to say: “ One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His Side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” When Joseph of Arimathæa craved of Pilate the Body of Jesus, “ Pilate marvelled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the Body to Joseph.” ||

It is certain that if the Jews had had any doubt as to His death, they would not have failed to make it a certainty, and the proof that they were sure of the fact lies in their demand for the sepulchre to be made sure, lest the disciples should come by night to steal the Body away. And here we may observe that it never entered the mind of the heathen Greek and Roman sophists to advance the statement that Jesus was not really dead.

The unenviable distinction of having cast such a doubt—as fallacious as it is impious—into men’s minds, has been reserved

* St. Mark xv. 37.

† St. Luke xxiii. 46.

‡ St. John xix. 30.

§ St. John xix. 33.

|| St. Mark xv. 44, 45.

for the infidel sophists of modern times. And what have they said? They pretend to believe—in the face of historical statement, and the evidence of an eye-witness of the fact—that the Body of our Saviour was unconscious, but not lifeless, when it was laid in the tomb; that the wounds were healed by the ointments applied to the Body, and the cold air of the sepulchre revived the inanimate Form.

Vain folly! which can be refuted by the very science they invoke to support it: for the secrets of chemistry teach us that the aroma of the ointments used for embalming, while they preserve the corpse from decay, have a fatal effect upon the living body; that the deadly chill of the sepulchral vault could have no power to reanimate an exhausted frame; that two or three days would have been all insufficient to heal the Saviour's wounds. Equally erroneous is their endeavour to pretend that the soldier's lance inflicted no deadly wound. But the testimony of St. John, who saw what ensued—“Forthwith came there out blood and water”^{*}—proves that the heart itself, the seat of life, had been transfixed by what must, therefore, have been a mortal thrust from the weapon.

When, by proving the fact of Christ's death upon the Cross the first objection of the enemies of Christianity has been refuted, they shift their ground entirely, and question the truth of His Resurrection from the dead. It is really difficult to see how there can be any possible doubt on this point. We have the account of the Resurrection from those who saw the Lord Jesus after he rose from the dead, not in a vision, not in a dream, but in broad daylight, many times during the space of forty days—in different circumstances, at different times. In the open country to the two disciples who journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus; “within,” the doors being shut, to the eleven as they sat at meat; by the Sea of Tiberias; upon the mountains of Galilee. St. Thomas, who did not at first believe in the truth of the Resurrection, was suffered to put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hands into the side of the Saviour's risen Body; and, on another occasion, to all His disciples Jesus said,

^{*} St. John xix. 34.

“Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.”*

Still “they believed not for joy,” and the Lord vouchsafed them a further proof. “He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them” (*ibid.*, 41-43). To this circumstance St. Peter triumphantly refers in his sermon before Cornelius: “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.” †

We may observe, also, that from the moment the disciples became convinced of the truth of their Lord’s Resurrection their timidity gave place to courage, their fears to confidence, and everywhere, with the greatest boldness, they “ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” But it has been objected that the disciples might have stolen the Body of their Lord from the tomb. Who is there that cannot perceive for himself the utter folly of this subterfuge, and that impiety is caught in its own snare? What had the disciples to gain by such an imposture? Men do not expose themselves to such a perilous enterprise as theirs would have been, without the incentive of some very strong motive, some great personal interest. Now what could have been the motive or interest in the case of the disciples.

Either they believed, or they did not believe, or they were doubtful. If they believed in the Resurrection, it was a useless effort on their part to steal away the Body themselves. If they did not believe in the Resurrection, there was nothing left for them but to abandon the cause of their Master as hopeless. If they doubted, their only course was to wait and see what the future would bring forth—which, in fact, they did. But supposing, for the sake of argument, that they had entertained any other idea, how could they possibly have accomplished their design?

Think of the great stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre,

* St. Luke xxiv. 39.

† Acts x. 40, 41.

sealed with the seal of the State, watched by the Roman soldiers. Force would have been of no avail, had they dared to venture upon it, and how little it would have been in accordance with the timidity which had led them to forsake their Master in the hour of His peril. Bribes they had none to offer. Stratagem? What stratagem was feasible to them? Any attempt to approach the sepulchre, either openly or by some other way, must have been immediately discovered.

But the guards slept, it is urged. What! the whole watch at a post of such importance? Ask any soldier in the army if that is even probable. Grant it to be so, and I would ask, with St. Augustine, If they were asleep, then how could they have seen the disciples bear away the Body of the Lord, and testify to their having done so? The argument is simple but conclusive.

It is an utter impossibility that the disciples could have succeeded in any such design. Had they succeeded, greater difficulties would have presented themselves. How could they hope to convince the world of the Resurrection of One Who had been condemned to death, and crucified between two thieves; and not only of His Resurrection, but also of His Godhead? How could they have persuaded the other followers of Jesus, who had no share in the enterprise; the Jews, whose credit as a nation was staked upon maintaining that Christ was an impostor; or the world at large, with a trick? for God would have vouchsafed no miracle to help an imposture. Would any of this have been possible?

The unbelievers, baffled upon this point, but having committed themselves to the statement that if they cannot explain away the miracle of the Resurrection they must give up all attempt to shake the faith of mankind in Christianity, make another effort; and again shifting their ground, declare that the Body of the Lord remained in the tomb. Not only is this contrary to the authenticated historical narrative of the Gospel, but it is contrary to common sense also. If that were the case then, why did not the Jews possess themselves of the Saviour's Body?

for by so doing, they could have destroyed effectually all belief in the Resurrection.

Yet more miserable is the last subterfuge of unbelief: that somehow or other the Body disappeared, and that the belief of the Apostles in the Resurrection of Christ rested on no other foundation than their own disordered imaginations—was nothing, in short, but the effect of hallucination.

It is worth while to pause for a moment, to show the entire fallacy of such a supposition as this. The disciples believed in the Resurrection after they had made proof of it by the evidence of their senses—after seeing their Lord with their eyes, hearing Him with their ears, and even handling, according to His gracious invitation, His risen Body. They did not surrender their doubts easily. The Bible tells us they believed not for joy; our Lord reproved them for being slow of heart to believe; St. Thomas remained in doubt for eight days; they required the “many infallible proofs” which they received, to convince them that He was indeed risen from the dead.

This is not the course pursued by people suffering under the effect of an hallucination. And, finally, I would ask, Was the great stone rolled back from the door of the sepulchre another hallucination of the imagination?—not to speak of the terror of the Roman soldiers, the empty tomb—were these creations of the disciples’ disordered fancy? The unbelievers who make a mock of the hallucination of Christians, are, in the face of such evidence as this, the victims of an hallucination themselves.

But yet once more. I will for the moment assume their suppositions to be true, and there will remain an insurmountable difficulty to be overcome: how to account for the effect produced upon the world by Christianity, if it had no other foundation than an hallucination in the minds of a few followers of Christ? Was that a foundation of sufficient stability to endure for centuries?

Others there are who have dared to call in question the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and to discredit the Gospel narrative as a mere legend. To these I would reply, setting

aside all tradition, setting aside the attested agreement as to the facts there narrated between the historians of the time—Christians, heretics, and Pagans alike—who never for a moment disputed the truth of the Gospel narrative, I would enquire, first, what could be the motive of the Apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus to court suffering and certain death for the sake of a cause which, if it were an imposture, could have been easily unmasked by those living at the time.

Secondly, without the direct inspiration of God, how would it have been otherwise possible for these poor, ignorant fishermen to write so sublime a narrative as that which is contained in the Gospels? In what other book that was ever written can you find delineations of characters so morally perfect as those of the Blessed Virgin, Joseph, and Elizabeth; a pattern of heroism sublime as was that of our Saviour; precepts more Divine in their character than His; or a more elevated system of morality than that which He taught?

What writers of mere human capacity could have told the wondrous tale of prophecy, and its fulfilment in the birth of Christ? have interwoven into the living drama of His life upon earth passages of such inspired pathos? and have maintained, from the beginning to the end, the speaking contrast between His voluntary lowliness and His real greatness, His humiliation and His exceeding glory, in which His nature, at once human and Divine, is made manifest throughout His earthly ministry?

Tell me, my brethren, which of us would have been capable of such an effort as this? Among all the great historians, the men of letters and science that have ever lived, and who have made known to us the history of mankind, is there one who could have written the Gospel narrative? “No,” exclaimed Rousseau, “this is no work of man’s device.”

If, then, the Gospels are not the invention of man, they are Divinely inspired of God; and strict logic compels us to confess that Jesus Christ, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." *

With the sublime pages of the Gospel ever before our eyes, what remains for us to do? To wonder and adore. And in so doing we shall find ourselves in a goodly company. We shall find ourselves in the company of art, and science, and genius; in the company of the greatest men who have ever lived upon the earth.

The arts, inspired by faith, have paid their tribute to Christianity in the erection of cathedrals which are the glory of the world—which seem to have been suggested by the rapt vision of St. John in the Island of Patmos, as he describes the Holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God. Man's greatest genius has been shown in works which, laid on the Altar of Christianity, have won for him his most enduring fame; and science has won her greatest triumphs in consecrating her researches to the cause of faith, thereby building up a bulwark against which the forces of the unbeliever may dash themselves in vain.

All the really great men of every age have professed the faith of Jesus Christ, whether as monarchs they have occupied the thrones of the earth, or whether as conquerors they have led armies into the field, or whether, under the noble banner of Christian charity, they have, by their exemplary lives, brought light and life into the dark and dismal places of the earth.

Even to this very day the apostles of unbelief may do their worst, but faith in Jesus Christ is still the light of true science; it still inspires art, and still it is the source of all that is great and noble among mankind. Here and there may be found, I grant, some renegade—some apostate from the faith; but shall the single example of such a one—be he novel-writer, newspaper editor, professor, or poet—be set for an instant against the united testimony of Christianity, which day by day carries down, through all ages, the echo of St. Peter's emphatic declaration,

* St. John i. 1-14

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!” and then takes up the triumphant strain taught by the Holy Church throughout the world: “For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father.”

Watch that child as he casts a stone into the river, fondly thinking thereby to stop its progress, and drive it back to its source; but the river continues to pursue its course, flowing steadily on to the sea. Thus it is with the impious man—the unbeliever of every age. While the generations succeed each other, flowing ever on in a continuous stream to Christ, from time to time some unbeliever appears, and casts into the midst of them his stone of blasphemy, thinking to arrest their course. But like the murmur of the waters, ever increasing, ever accumulating as they flow, they make answer: “The love of Christ constraineth us; who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

But why, my brethren, I would say to the Theist and the unbeliever, if either were here, *why* seek to separate us from the love of Christ? Is it in the interests of God, I would ask of the Theist, or in the interests of humanity? The Theist will reply: In the interests of God. But a father without a son ceases to be a father, and instead of God the Father Almighty, Who like a father pitieth His own children, you would have us believe in a Being existing of and for Itself, in absolute self-consciousness—egotistical, therefore, as the Theist himself.

I reply, God is not only a God of Power, He is also a God of Love; and that only as He has been revealed to us by His Son can we hope to understand His infinite love and compassion for us. Perhaps, then, it is in the interests of humanity that you would seek to separate us from Christ? What will you offer to humanity in His stead? What consolation have you at hand for those who suffer? What channel of communication can you make between the rich and the poor? What would you put in place of “the wisdom by which kings reign, and princes decree justice”? How would you propose to still “the madness of the people”?

My brethren, when the people have been robbed of their Saviour, to whom are they to go to pour out their complaints?—to whom can they show their trouble? Have compassion, at all events, upon the misfortunes of humanity, and if the unbeliever is deaf to the voice of religion, in the name of philanthropy I appeal to him not to deprive men of their consolation in their Saviour.

Think of the sorrows and sufferings of life. Shall not the poor man who works hard all the week find rest for one day near the Cross of Christ, which is to him as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Shall not the weak find in Him a strong Deliverer?—women and children, the “little ones” who believe in Him, the poor and the needy, the sick and the dying, in the last hour when all human help is vain?

To those, then, who seek to blot out Christianity from the earth I would say: Blot out *first* the sorrows and sufferings of life. Disarm, moreover, the hostile forces of the world, lest in the day when faith is no longer to be found in the earth—in the day when the Cross of Christ has been wrested from the people—they take up arms instead, and rush upon each other in the fury of unrestrained passion. Then, indeed, may we cover our heads, and bow before the impending storm.

“Then shall we look for judgment, and behold oppression; for righteousness, and behold a cry.”



VI.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

MY BRETHREN,—Once again I lift up my voice and ask : Who is Jesus Christ ? Is Jesus Christ the Son of God ? Yes ! the Bible makes answer ; holding up to our gaze the portrait of the Messiah before His coming, so unmistakable, that in that day it was said by those who sought for Him : “ We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. . . . We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write.” *

Yes ! the Gospel makes answer, displaying the corresponding portrait made by eye-witnesses of “ That Which was from the beginning, Which we have heard, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.” †

Yes ! the Church makes answer, jealously guarding the sacred trust, that she may ever keep before the minds of men the true portrait of their Redeemer. Else were her councils which have defined it, her apologists who have defended it, of little avail.

Yes ! Science makes answer ; for there is no other explanation of the life of Christ upon earth.

Yes ! Common Sense declares ; for otherwise what are Christian faith and love but mockery and illusion ?—Christian wisdom folly, Christian inspiration an imposture, Christian zeal fruitless, and Christian self-sacrifice vain ; churches and cathedrals useless waste, the Cross foolishness. Folly, every holy emotion of the soul—folly in the priests to preach, folly in the people to listen, folly in all who administer the rite of Holy Baptism, folly in all who receive it, folly in those who hold the

* St. John i. 41-45.

† 1 St. John i. 1.

Cross before the dying eyes of the Christian, and in the Name of Jesus bring comfort and hope to the parting soul.

Folly everywhere! Self-deceit and illusion! Folly in the private life of the citizen, folly in the public welfare of the State—folly which, dating back nineteen centuries, is still in existence, and likely to last for ever. And, if all this will not suffice, I have yet another proof to bring forward, as inseparable from the Divine Person of our Saviour as the halo which surrounds the planets.

What is this further proof? This is what I will endeavour to explain to you to-day, if you will give me your careful attention. What is this further proof? Let us recapitulate the argument. We have seen that Christ is both God and Man—Perfect God, and Perfect Man. God, of the Substance of His Father, begotten before the world; Man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world.

Now, it being accepted as an indisputable truth that Jesus Christ is God—One with His Father in Heaven—it follows that no one can love Christ without loving God, or love God without loving Christ. “I and My Father are One.”* These are Christ’s own words. The love of God and the love of Christ are so inseparably united that the one cannot exist without the other. Follow the reasoning to its conclusion, and you must admit that, as no man can love Christ and not love God, so no man can hate Christ and not hate God also. The same reasoning applies to the human side of our Lord’s nature, as the Son of Man is also the impersonation of humanity. No one, therefore, can love Christ without carrying that love on to the whole human race, of which the Person of our Saviour Christ is the perfect representative; so no man can hate Christ without hating his fellow-creatures also. Hence we must conclude that, according as our love is to Christ, such will be the rule of our conduct towards God and towards our fellow-creatures. As the Lord Jesus uttered the words, “It is finished,” and gave up His life,

* St. John x. 30.

immediately, at the foot of the Cross there sprang into being two flowers of sublime love—the love of God, the love of our neighbour. They twine round the Cross of Christ; they are centred in Him; by His death they live. We will consider first the love of God.

Jesus said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* Yes, the Lord Jesus asks of man, not only the homage of unquestioning faith; He wills, also, that man should render Him the service of his understanding—the reasoning love of his undivided affection and heart. Now what did the Lord Jesus do to establish this empire over man’s whole being—such an empire as had never before entered into any human calculation?

There are several well-known practised methods pursued by those who wish to sway the hearts of the crowd and become popular favourites. They may surround themselves with the fascination of splendour and glory; they may make large promises; they may trust to the fire of enthusiasm, or to the persuasive arts of eloquence. But where will you find glory in Christ’s life upon earth? Is it in the manger in which He was born, or in the obscurity of His dwelling place?—in the poverty of His life, or in His death as a malefactor upon the Cross? Surely this is not the kind of splendour or glory likely to dazzle mankind!

What are the promises that Christ makes to His followers? What earthly reward does He hold out to them? Hatred, persecution, and death!

My brethren, judged by the ordinary rules of wordly wisdom, it would seem as if no worse scheme for securing popularity, or the love of the people, could have been devised. But it is the scheme of Christ Himself, and I ask you, Has not Christ won for Himself the love of mankind? Day by day, from the heart of humanity, like the ceaseless echo of the words of St. Peter, there goes up the cry: “Lord Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” †

* St. Matt. xxii. 37.

† St. John xxi. 17.

History tells us that Napoleon the Great, as he sat meditating in the lonely hours of his banishment at St. Helena, used to please himself by passing in review the great characters of history; and, as he paused to contemplate, in its radiant perfection, the Person of the Saviour, it is said that he exclaimed, "Here, at last, is One Who made Himself beloved by mankind." They are golden words; for mankind has consecrated to Christ an undying, unequalled, everlasting love. His Name alone has power to stir every emotion of the human soul. It is murmured in soft accents by the mother as she bends over the cradle to bless the innocent sleep of childhood; it is invoked in the last extremity of mortality to give pardon and peace. It has been the glory of the armies of Christendom as they went forth to fight for the cause of truth and righteousness; it has been their crown of victory after the battle.

Again, cast a glance at the nations of the Middle Ages, as by common consent they arm themselves in one common cause—kings and princes, knights and soldiers—and march with the one watchword, "God wills it." Whither? and for what? To deliver the Holy Sepulchre of Christ* from the hands of the infidel. And how many a faithful pilgrim since then has journeyed to the Holy Land to kiss the soil which once received the impress of His sacred Feet, to visit the scene of His Agony and Death. Emperors have disputed with each other for a relic of His garments, a fragment of His Cross. The Cross of Christ!—it meets us at every step on our journey through life. It is there on the edge of the precipice; it is below on the ocean's rocky shore; in the consecrated church, in the wilds of the deserts, in the vast forests of the New World, in the heart of the busiest and most populated city of Europe.

Christ is the centre of all hearts; all Christendom unites beneath the Cross. Christians may be divided by nationality,

* "Their limbs all iron, and their souls all flame,

A countless host, the Red Cross warriors came."—Heber's "*Palestine*."

[Translator's Note.]

by varying interest, by conflicting passions; but let the hand of sacrilege be lifted up against the Altar of Christ, or the pen of blasphemy attack His holy Name, and every difference will be forgotten, and all hearts will unite in defence of the one sacred cause—that of their Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ.

What is the nature of this love, which is subject to no rule of time or space? Jesus said, “I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?” * And the Saviour’s prediction has been fulfilled, in that for nineteen centuries that fire of love for Christ has burnt with a steady, undying flame.

In truth, what can unbelief or error avail against the power of Jesus Christ? They may for a time alienate here and there a nation from His truth, and appear to triumph, as they teach the lessons of sacrilege, in the desecration of the Altar, the trampling under foot of the Cross, the destruction of the Holy Scriptures, the abnegation of Christian doctrine. But while, in a fit of temporary madness, this or that nation is sowing the wind of impiety to reap the whirlwind of eternal infamy, far beyond the distant seas, “Surely the isles wait for Him to bring their sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the Name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified Thee.” †

The apostasy of one nation is balanced by the conversion of another; and when civilisation, as it loses its grasp of faith, degenerates into barbarism, the distant heathen lands are redeemed, by faith, to civilisation. The untaught savage fills the gap left by the apostate from the faith, while from the depths of some primeval forest, from the ends of the earth, the prophecy is daily fulfilled that “The nations that knew not Thee shall run unto Thee.” ‡ For still the Saviour’s command is now what it was to the Apostles on the day of His Ascension: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;

* St. Luke xii. 49.

† Isaiah lx. 9.

‡ Isaiah lv. 5.

teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." *

How, then, can we keep from loving Christ, Whose love for us is as boundless as it is everlasting? It is true that many ages separate us from that period when He trod this earth. It is not for us to see the Divine compassion of that Face, or to hear the persuasive accents of the Voice which said : " Come unto Me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Many a convulsion has swept since then over the face of the earth ; many an empire has crumbled to its decay ; many and mighty States have yielded to the ravages of time. But across the gulf of ages, and down the stream of human generations, the living Form of the Saviour comes to meet us still ; and though far removed from Him by the earthly measurements of time and space, we can draw near to Him with the offering of a pure heart, and in its best and undivided affection give Him the best gift this life affords.

Let us cast one rapid glance at what has been done for the love of Christ. The test of love is sacrifice. Let history tell of the sacrifices inspired by the love of Christ. Look at the Apostles, who were cast into prison, were tortured, torn with scourges, were destitute, afflicted, tormented, and yet rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. Take a glance next at the Coliseum at Rome. Who is that old man in the arena? Look at the fire of love in his eyes, listen to the firm tones of his voice : " Let not your wild beasts deal gently with me." † It is his zeal for Christ which makes him long to prove it by constancy in this most cruel, barbarous death.

Again, who is that beautiful girl? The son of the Roman prefect has asked her in marriage. Will she but cast a few grains of incense to the idol, she is free—she is his. But she

* St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

† St. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostles, particularly of St. John the Evangelist. His martyrdom took place when he was over 120 years old.

has given her faith to Christ, and her head rolls beneath the stroke of the executioner. Was she mad? If so, it was for the love of Christ.

Look again. There is a mother surrounded by her children; one by one they are taken from her, and put to death. The last, a child six years old, remains; she trembles. Why? Not for herself—for this last and worst pang of all; but for the child, lest his faith should fail; and with word and caress she encourages him, and carries him in her arms to death, to make the last sacrifice for Christ. Was she mad? If it were so, it was for the love of Christ.

This is the kind of love which has sustained the martyrs in the midst of the most excruciating tortures, and made so many to be “numbered with God’s saints in glory everlasting”—a love before which the tyrant has trembled in astonishment, the executioner turned pale. It is the secret of religion; it is, in the language of St. Paul, the watchword of the Church: “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

And is there no example now of the power of that love? What is it but the love of Christ which sends the missionary forth from his home and his country to be the bearer of the Gospel tidings to savages who may reward his zeal with a cruel death? What is it but the love of Christ which inspires every act of self-sacrifice? which puts charity into the heart of the rich man, and preaches resignation to the poor? which lightens the burden of life, and softens the pangs of death? which prompts every noble deed, and holds in check every evil passion?

From East to West, from North to South, the love for Christ is such as to exceed all power of human speech, every fond affection of the soul, and to account for the highest sacrifice of self. It was the contemplation of the effects of this Divine love which drew from Napoleon a yet further testimony to its power: “I, who have had much to do with men—I, who know what men are—I tell you that Jesus Christ is not only man. Jesus Christ is more than man—Jesus Christ is God.”

Let us now consider the second kind of love: the love to

man. At the same time that Christ enjoined the love of God, being Himself God, He enjoined the love to man also, being Himself also Man. From its very beginning, the love to man received an inspiration from Christ, which ennobled it into a sublime passion of the soul. At first it excited wonder and astonishment, and was looked upon with contempt, as a sort of frenzy. Let us examine a little what was the love to man before the coming of Christ. What do the ancient writers say of it? I will not say that they ignore it altogether; there are some fragments among the writings of their philosophers and poets which praise the virtue of hospitality and notice the existence of compassion, which Cicero tells us is proper to the nature of man. Seneca has some fine passages also; but then that is scarcely fair testimony, as the influence of Christianity was at that time beginning to leave its impression upon mankind.

But what are a few words murmured in a school of philosophy when compared with the doctrine of egotism which prevailed in the world? The expressions of the poet with regard to poverty and slavery and the treatment of women are such as to provoke a shudder. Cato, in spite of his severe morality, recommended that old servants should be sold like old oxen; and Seneca himself praised the custom of putting to death weakly children, as it was a matter of reason, and not of heart. It is related of a Roman Emperor that he issued an imperial decree to collect all the poor in the empire for the purpose of drowning them in the sea, on the ground that compassion is the sign of a weak understanding.

This is a specimen of man's love to man left to its own natural instinct. But hardly had Christ finished His Sacrifice upon the Cross, when a new order of humanity appeared to inaugurate the reign of pure, disinterested love—love to man for the sake of the Lord Who had taken upon Himself the nature of man. The world, incapable of inspiring, promoting, even of understanding such love, rejected it with contempt; and it found a first refuge in the Catacombs, where the martyrs, on the eve of tortures and death, practised the new commandment which they

had received from their Master, in praying for the forgiveness of their persecutors of the morrow.

But the world would not surrender itself to the new and strange doctrine without tremendous opposition. Prejudice, ancient custom, world-famed institutions, the teaching of philosophers, the might of the Cæsars, stood arrayed to withstand the attack. But do not be dismayed for the result: the victory is certain. Let the ancient world stand there on the one side in all its pride and power, with all its evil, with all its brutal force, and it is no match for that new love which Jesus Christ has given to man—love that is stronger than sufferings or death—love that many waters cannot quench, neither the flood drown.* And then, by degrees, the old social code of custom disappeared, and was swallowed up in the new theory of love. Henceforward the strength of human nature in man's true nobility, and the weakness of human nature in its most endearing and sacred form—the helplessness of women and children—will command an equal respect. It is acknowledged that the bondman has an immortal soul, and that all souls are equal in the sight of God. This spirit of love crosses even the threshold of Cæsar's palace, and works a regeneration there; once embarked in this course there is no power that can arrest the progress of Christian love.

The Apostles invite to their feasts of charity the poor, the lowly, and the despised, and feed them with the Bread of Life. The fathers of the Church, who succeed the Apostles, and are the immediate heirs of their Christian love, follow in the same path; and soon, at their bidding, the convent and the hospital arise to offer the shelter of their walls to the homeless and the sick.

“Look at those Galileans!” exclaimed Julian the Apostate; “they are not content with providing for their own poor people, they must needs provide for ours also.” In the Middle Ages observe how the charitable institutions become multiplied, and how thickly the soil of a Christian state becomes sown with hospitals

* Cant. viii. 7.

and schools, monasteries and convents. They abound everywhere—in the lowest valley, on the highest mountain-top.

And what has not the love of the Lord Jesus done for the cause of the unhappy slave? Alone in his prison, torn from his home and family, with no one to care for him, exposed all day to toil and labour and hardship, chained perhaps to the oar till he died the death of exhaustion, what shall succour him? The love of Christ. Christian love has power to break the manacles from his wrist, the fetters from his feet, and bid him go free.

Think of St. John Damascene* and St. Peter Nolasco,† who founded the order for the redemption of slaves from captivity. Undaunted by perils of storm and climate, or the barbarians, they gladly risk their lives in this great work. In Whose Name will they restore them to their country and their home? In the Name of the love of Jesus Christ.

Come with me to the bleak summit of St. Bernard, where lies eternal snow. It is night, but there is a light within the little chapel on the mountain-top. The tempest is roaring round the chapel, but inside songs of praise are rising to God. Enter and watch the scene which greets your eyes. There are two men—one is young, his countenance all aglow with enthusiasm; the other old, grave with the experience of a lifetime written on his face. “My son,” he says, “do you persist in your design?” “Yes, father.” “Do you swear to remain here on this solitary spot, and devote your life to rescuing lost travellers?” “Yes, father; I

* St. John Damascene, born at the end of the seventh century, and died 780. He was the Governor of the city of Damascus. He resigned his honours, and disposed of his estates in favour of the Church and the poor. He was also a great writer upon the Christian dogma.

† St. Peter Nolasco, born of the noble family of Nolasco in Lanquedoc, 1189. He was the founder of the Order of our Lady for the redemption of Christian captives from slavery. He undertook many journeys for this purpose, and was himself at one time in prison. He rescued thousands, and died on Christmas Day, 1256. His last words were: “The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people. He hath commanded His Covenant for ever.” [Translator’s Note.]

swear to do so." "Then God be with you, my son." And the young man rises full of joy, and in spite of the falling snow begins at once his self-imposed task; and if, from time to time, he is able to rescue some lost traveller, he returns to the convent full of joy. Sometimes he is overtaken by the sudden storm, and the snow wraps him round—a white sheet, the type of his innocent life.* Here is Christian love.

Or take another example; and look at that young girl who comes of a noble race, with every attraction of personal beauty, every great quality—a cultivated mind, an exquisite refinement of taste, education, and character. It seems as if nature had destined her for some high earthly position. But suddenly, in the secret chamber of her heart, a still small Voice makes itself heard—a call to follow Christ. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider: incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty, for He is thy Lord God, and worship thou Him." And she forsakes all—the joys of love, the pleasures of the world—and devotes herself to a religious life; and from that time you may see her in the severe simplicity of the dress of her order wherever there is want and suffering, pain or disease, by the bedside of the sick and suffering, or surrounded by the horrors of the battle-field amid the dying and dead, with tender offices, words of consolation, and a prayer for all. What is the secret of this self-sacrifice? The love of Christ which, in loving Him, brings us near to some perception of the Divine love, that alone can inspire works of charity and faith like this.

In point of fact, to love those whom it is our interest to love: that is a kind of love which we have often seen, and which we shall often see again. Again, the kind of love which, prompted by caprice or the natural love of beauty, passionately adores the object of its affection one day, becomes cold and indifferent on

* St. Bernard, of Menthon, Savoy, b. 923. Founded the two Monasteries of Great and Little St. Bernard, upon the mountains which now bear his name, for the succour of travellers. Died 1008. [Translator's Note.]

the morrow, and finally ends in hate : that kind of love has been seen many times, and will probably be seen many times more. Or the love for those who love us, the beloved members of our family, or for some dear and intimate friend : that kind of love has been seen many times, and will probably be seen many times more.

But to build with steady hand the noble edifice of fraternal love upon the demolished ruin of every selfish desire, every selfish interest—all the fond delight of human love, and especially that part of it which flatters our self-love ; to extend this free gift of love to all our fellow creatures always, wherever they are—in the Arctic snows, as in the vast expanse of the Equatorial regions ; to the man who has reduced himself to the condition of a brute, to the untaught savage, or to some one whom personal deformity, the ravages of time, or habits of vice have made an object of disgust. This, my brethren, is the greatest marvel that has ever appeared in the world.

This marvel is the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who for our sakes took our nature upon Him, our infirmities and our weaknesses. You may search for it vain through all the records of ancient history, and you will find no example of love like this. You may look for it in vain amongst the nations that know not Christ. It is only to be found beneath the shadow of the Cross of Christ ; because upon that Cross “ Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps.” My brethren, side by side with those who love Christ—who have forsaken all to follow Him—we must place those who deny and hate Christ. Great God ! can it be so—that there are men who actually hate the Saviour Who gave His life for them ? Yet there are such ; and I will ask you to observe them carefully—these renegades from Christianity.

How is it with their relationship towards God ? I will not speak of their love for Him ; but have they even a thought for Him ? “ No man hath seen God at any time ” ; * this is the

* St. John i. 18.

language both of religion and faith. But St. John adds: "The only begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."†

Yes, Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to reveal to our finite understanding some of the hidden things of God; to "declare" them not only by His words, but by His works. The false religions of the world present, under this guise or that, some symbol of the Creator; but Christianity is the only form of religion which, possessing the true knowledge of the Living God, can impart it to mankind.

Guided by Christianity, we may know God; we may claim Him as our God for ever and ever; we may learn to understand His government of the universe, the nature of His rewards, the certainty of His punishments; and we may watch the unfolding of the great drama of life, which, with all its changes and chances, must ultimately lead to the triumph of Christianity and the salvation of the world, under the all-merciful, all-powerful guidance of God.

If we reject Christ, what becomes of our relationship to God? I do not ask what becomes of our love to Him, but whether we can even think of Him aright. By a wilful rejection of Christ we place ourselves at a distance from God; He hides His face from us, and becomes farther and farther out of our reach. Some abstract, vague idea takes the place of the Living God in our minds, and we fall from one error into another, till at last we are landed in perfect Atheism; and like the blind, groping vainly in the dark, so the unhappy man, who has lost the true knowledge of God, tries to replace his loss by some erroneous conception of his own brain, each one for himself, as if it could be done as easily as the spider can weave his web.

But supposing this apostasy to be accomplished, what becomes next of our duty to our fellow creatures, whose existence we are forced to acknowledge? We live in an age which aspires to celebrate the triumph of humanity, and, by removing the barriers

* St. John i. 18.

betwixt nationalities, can bid the various countries of the world exchange thought and join hands in daily intercourse; and philanthropy partakes more of the character of frenzy than duty, as if the world had no other object than to declare that a greater love for humanity is the natural result of a dereliction from duty towards God and Christ.

But the logic of facts proves this to be a complete fallacy. Look closely at those anti-Christians and unbelievers—those legislators and politicians—and you will soon see that there is something lacking in them, that their calculations are as cold as the frost of a winter's night, their hearts as hard and impenetrable as the marble of the tomb. The heart which does not rest in Jesus Christ becomes petrified with egotism.

Then look at the philosophers of the preceding age. They soon perceived that the barren word liberty would not suffice to win over the multitudes to their side. They understood that they must find something to put in the place of the charity enjoined by religion, and they invented philanthropy, which is the heresy, the counterfeit, the parody of charity—which takes away the substance, and leaves the shadow, and, having lost its Divine sweetness, retains merely the stale flavour of humanity.

“Compassion is nothing but a weakness, unless it has for its object the universal welfare of mankind.” So wrote Condorcet, one of this school of philosophy; and the principle of this school is to direct every effort to benefit mankind to the species at large, despising alike individual and families. Hypocritical jargon, which made even Rousseau exclaim: “These philosophers are ready to lavish their affection upon the Tartar race, but have none for their nearer neighbours.”

Listen to the dogma of modern sociology, which has been formulated in a recent publication in words which we shall do well to ponder upon: “The welfare of the strong is promoted by the elimination of the weak element—a beneficent law which has for its result concentration of force, the evolution of the species, and and the progress of humanity.” This doctrine leads us straight to the violent and brutal destruction of the weak, the infirm,

and the miserable, on the plea of vital necessity and social progress.

But, Father, I seem to hear someone say, the facts are against you. There have been men who have forsworn Christianity, but who have yet done much good for the cause of humanity, and have assuaged the sufferings of mankind. But it suffices to answer such people in the words of the author of "The Life of the Cæsars": "If they succeed in doing any good to their fellow-creatures, it is due to the influence of Christianity, which, in spite of them, leavens their conduct and affects their surroundings. Without the beneficent influence of Christianity, which has regenerated the whole world, they would not have been able to accomplish what little good they may have done; indeed, the idea of it would never have entered their heads. What appears to be the result of their individual virtue, is, in fact, the germ of Christianity—the breath of its life-giving atmosphere. Without that quickening breath the social condition of mankind is like the parched and desert waste."

I would ask you again, When Christ has been denied, and God has been forgotten, what chance remains for mankind? For the folly of the theory of Atheism is only equalled by the horror of its application. We know what was the end of the century which began with the impious defiance of God. We cannot contemplate even now its tale of horror without a shudder.

It was not long before the murderer, athirst for the blood of human sacrifice, sat in the seat of the scorner, and the blood of the priests was not the only blood which began to flow in torrents during the wicked Reign of Terror. Can anyone say that the denial of Christ served then to further promote the love of God or the interests of mankind? The altar, it is true, was raised to Atheism; but every vice humanity is capable of assisted at the inauguration.

Was it for the welfare or happiness of mankind that the Tribune of Death was erected in every corner of the State while, in ghastly confirmation of Nero's savage desire, the bloodthirsty tyrants wished that humanity had only one head, that it might

fall at one stroke. Such, with regard to man's welfare, were the first-fruits of the denial of Christ and blasphemy against God.

Hardly has sophistry taught its first lesson of unbelief, when its words find an echo in the mutterings of Nihilism threatening to overturn the social order of the world. The promise of liberty is fulfilled by acts of the greatest tyranny; and while the one hand pretends to exchange the grasp of fraternity, the other is diligently employed in sowing the seed of universal discord, and philanthropy is only the mask for self-interest. This is the kind of love which the world offers to us in exchange for the Divine love of Christ. But let us, my brethren, diligently endeavour to cherish and keep alive the flower of Christian charity in the desert waste of an age of egotism, though it has to struggle upwards through the entangling weeds of care and disappointment, base motives and false faith. Above all, let us keep fast hold of our faith in Christ Jesus—the connecting link between earth and Heaven, man and God; by which also we know that “One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren” (St. Matt. xxiii. 8).



VII.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

MY BRETHREN,—If we are by nature men, we are by grace Christians. By nature born in sin and the children of wrath, by Christian Baptism we become the children of grace—closely united to God with an indissoluble link. Now what is our first duty as Christians? It is the duty of the disciple to become impregnated with the spirit and teaching of his master. It is duty of a son to follow the example set him by his father.

Now we acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the express Image of His Father's glory; for is not "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" to be found "in the Face of Jesus Christ"?*—at Whose Name "every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."† During the nineteen centuries of Christianity the atmosphere of His teaching surrounds us like the very air we breathe. We have seen the transformation it can effect in human nature; we have recognised it as the life-giving Spark which kindles the genius of man; the still small Voice which can awaken the depths of man's heart; the Word which holds the key to past memories and future hope.

The Christian's endeavour should be to raise himself out of the mire of evil habits, and to climb to the summit of the highest virtue, in the Name and by the help of Jesus Christ. But, alas! as I look around me in the present age, I ask myself if we are not about to be plunged again in the dense ignorance of Paganism. The knowledge of religion is scantily diffused; there are many to whom it is a dead letter altogether. There is no recognition of the Divine character of the Saviour—a total indifference to the ineffable mystery of the redemption of the world; and those who are ready to go into raptures over the social advantages of Chris-

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Phil. ii. 10.

tianity have no idea of looking to Christ as to the Light Which is to lighten their understanding—as to the Guide Who should regulate their rule of life.

The angels, in despair, must be prepared to rewrite upon the pediment of our churches the inscription St. Paul discovered upon the Athenian Altar: “To the unknown God.” The life of Christ is fast becoming a closed book to mankind. His doctrine no longer taught, no longer inspires the mind of men. The mysteries of His religion, being persistently ignored, can no longer influence man’s heart. The Creeds are forgotten. This is the state of things we have now to deal with. Neither in the Cradle at Bethlehem, neither on the Cross on Mount Calvary, neither in His Church upon earth, neither in His future Kingdom, is there any thought for Jesus Christ. All is forgotten—even that last awful day when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead. Then, whether we will or no, every eye must behold Him—must recognise the Person of the Divine Saviour; for each will see for himself the wounds by which Christ won the world’s ransom, and each for himself will hear from His sacred lips the words of the wisdom of God.

Who can paint what will then be the shame, the grief, and remorse of those who have refused to know Christ? “What,” exclaims St. Jerome, “can we find to say for ourselves before God’s tribunal, if we have exercised ourselves in the study of every science but that of the Gospel?” To save ourselves from so fearful a predicament, let us, my brethren, continue the study of our Saviour Jesus Christ. To-day we will devote ourselves to the reverent contemplation of the moral aspect of His life and teaching. We shall be struck with the combination of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom; and we shall be able to reject one current form of Atheism, which, while it treacherously offers all praise to our Saviour as a great Man, as a great Philosopher, and a great Reformer of mankind, dares to withhold His title to the Godhead.

Our Saviour Christ, before teaching the people, began by showing them His mighty works. He wills that deeds should

precede words, and that practice should come before theory. Here lies the secret of the silence of His first thirty years. He can well be silent, because His works speak for Him. Look at Him in the house of Mary and Joseph. It is not the actual manger of Bethlehem, but its poverty is not many degrees removed from it. Yet beneath the roof of that humble artisan, what riches of grace, what spiritual treasures are hid ! There, in that lowly abode, you may contemplate Him with wondering adoration, as He dedicates Himself to the practice of those sublime virtues—humility, labour, and obedience.

It was of supreme importance to the human race that poverty should be glorified in their sight by Him Who “for our sakes became poor.” Men had too long become accustomed to lavish their admiration upon riches, to look upon them as the only source of earthly enjoyment, and to associate greatness with splendour. Wealth appeared to them power—large possessions to ensure happiness ; and they forgot that man’s moral worth and all his energies are tested by the struggle involved in the trials and vicissitudes of life.

This is what Jesus came to prove by His birth in obscurity and poverty. There is no manner of doubt that, had He willed it, He might have been born in a different and more exalted position of life, in the midst of every circumstance that could have contributed to earthly happiness. But no ; He chose to be born of the handmaiden of the Lord, one who was “of low estate,” to pass the first years of His life in the pursuit of a humble trade at Nazareth, to show that poverty does not degrade, but, on the contrary, raises us above the ordinary level of humanity, strengthens the character, and fits us for the great efforts of life. But further, Jesus Christ chose to combine labour with poverty ; and here, again, He intended to meet and overcome a natural predisposition fatal to man’s happiness.

There is no doubt that labour of whatever kind, taken by itself, is a painful and irksome effort. The economists may say what they please of the charm and advantage of labour, they cannot divest it of that semblance of effort, humiliation and

suffering, which is so distasteful to the majority of mankind. But yet, what other means does this life afford for perfecting the faculties which God has given us? It is only by means of labour that we can cultivate our intelligence; it is only by means of labour that we can overcome difficulties and obstacles, and avail ourselves of the advantage of material to provide us with the actual necessities of life. So that, as a fact, labour is indispensable.

Jesus Christ, in order to make this condition of life more acceptable to us, and to dispose us the more readily to practise it, chose a life of labour. He did not choose an occupation which would win Him the applause of the world; but He placed Himself in the lowest rank of labour, that He might ennoble it. In the sweat of His brow He *chose* to eat His bread.

Nor is this all. Mankind had need of an example in the practise of another very difficult virtue—the virtue of obedience. Yes, my brethren, obedience is a very difficult virtue; and it is conspicuous by its neglect in the present age. Nothing is talked of now but independence. The subversion of authority is an accepted doctrine; and yet you may observe that the dissemination of this principle is accompanied in every case by an increase of servility among mankind. The saying of Tacitus, “*ruere in servitium*” (to rush into slavery), is in full force at the present moment. Yes, with all this cry of independence, mankind falls prostrate before every kind of servility, and what little self-respect remains is sacrificed to the demands of personal interest with a promptitude which is appalling to a man of upright character.

You will, moreover, find this kind of servility in every class of society—in the higher classes, as well as in the ranks of the people. There are many acknowledged as leaders, although they know themselves to be unworthy to hold the reins of power; but are yet flattered and idolised because they in their turn flatter the lowest instincts of human nature; while it is in vain that you seek for the honest acceptance of man’s obligation and duty.

But Christ willed to obey; and you will observe with wonder that in that holy family at Nazareth it is the One Who is greatest Who chooses to serve. St. Joseph, we read, was a "just man," but this does not place him on an equality of merit with her who was "highly favoured," whom all future generations should "call blessed." Nor, again, can the Blessed Virgin be placed on an equality with her Divine Son. Yet it is Joseph who commands; Mary and Jesus Who obey. Or it is Mary who commands; Jesus Who obeys—Who "is subject" unto His earthly parent—and with what perfection, what eagerness, what tender respect! All these things we should, like Mary, keep and ponder in our hearts. So that resignation in poverty, a love of labour (which also teaches us to restrict the circle of our necessities and desires), submission to authority from a sense of duty, in the interests of order and social well-being; here are the great duties which, from the very first, command our admiration in the character of the Lord Jesus, in Whom we have the perfect picture of a well-regulated life.

But more than all it is necessary to study the life of the Lord Jesus in His ministry, because here His sphere of action becomes more extensive. The moment is come for Him to show Himself to the people. Let us try and picture to ourselves what He was like; let us make as if we were of the crowd who follow His steps.

A Man like other men?—Is that the first impression? Look again, and see the Heavenly calm of that gaze; His demeanour, so ineffable in its sweetness, so Divine in its majesty; the countenance where shines the light of the glory of God; and every perfection of the human form, as it was first made after God's likeness, in God's image, "and behold it was very good."

Christian art, in the hands of Raphael and Murillo, has taught us to associate with the expression a pathetic resignation, as of the Victim ready for the sacrifice, the Lamb which was to be offered without spot to God. It is on this account that the heretics who began by denying the Divinity of Christ were followed by those who called in question His human nature.

To us the contrary form of reasoning suggests itself, and it would seem that when men seek to account for the character of Jesus, they should begin by acknowledging His Divine nature.

But no; they choose instead to doubt whether it is possible that such a nature can be truly man. Some will have it that His Body was a mere phantom; others, of celestial matter; and all agree that It was of a different nature to ours. Such was the incredulous surprise awakened in the minds of the contemporaries of Christ upon the earth by His pure and blameless life; so deeply were they persuaded that such perfect virtue could not be exhibited in any man. In these days the endeavour is to bring down the Lord Jesus to our level, and to say that He was a great Man, a great Philosopher, a great Philanthropist; but His heroism and His holiness are in themselves a protest against this blasphemy.

What has the character of the Holy Saviour in common with that of "a great man," in the common acceptance of the term? We know them—the world's great men—the great genius, the great philanthropist, the great conqueror—what are they, so often, but sinful men after all? They have more talent, more courage, than their fellow men; and so they obtain the title of "great." But there is no point of comparison between the greatest of the world's great men and Jesus Christ. None of the greatest men of genius, the greatest conquerors, those who have laid the foundation of empires, can come near to Christ. Examine closely their actions, their virtues, their personal holiness, and tell me if there is one of them who has not failed in some one point. There is some stain upon the lives of each and all. Socrates was noble in his death, but was his life blameless? It would be nothing short of blasphemy and insult to institute a parallel between the two, and to set the shallow merits of the one against the holiness of the other.

Oh! my brethren, had the world ever seen such a conjunction of moral perfections? Who can describe all the virtues which adorned that Divine Pattern of Humanity? It suffices to read the Gospels to become convinced of them, for the

Evangelists who beheld those virtues practised them also. Read, then, that narrative for yourselves, and dwell with delight on such a study. If some perfection appears to you less marked than another, peruse it again, and you will find it stand forth shining with light. Then read on, without fear of any exaggeration to disturb the perfect balance of the whole. All that you have ever conceived or imagined of a sweetness that is serious, and a power that is awe-inspiring—every ideal perfection which we believe to exist in God alone—tell me, is not all this revealed to us in the character of Jesus Christ? All panegyric falls short of the reality, and human praise stands mute in silent adoration of the holiness of His life.

It is in vain to attempt to falsify the representation of our Saviour. Our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, is not the romantic ideal—more or less inflated—of this or that biographer. Our Lord Jesus is the true Lord Jesus—the Lord Jesus of the Gospel; and notwithstanding the incomparable perfection of His character, it is true, because it is drawn from life. The Divine nature is manifest by the absence of any defect; the human nature in all the truth of those emotions which are proper to it.

Look at His great love! Look at that love for Him to Whom He so constantly addresses Himself as “My Father.” Look at the zeal for His glory. Then, again, look at His love to man. Is He not the unfailing Comforter, the Guide, the Teacher of mankind? No man ever loved mankind as He did. There is no misfortune to which He is insensible. He has a tear for every sorrow, a succour for every want. There is no single moment of His life which is not spent for others.

Follow Him as He goes about from place to place, from city to city: always, everywhere, He went about doing good. He has but to open His lips to perform miracles and mighty works, and from the mere contact of His garments virtue will bring healing.* And you will observe that every miracle which He

* “If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole” (St. Matt. ix. 21).

performs is not for the manifestation of His Own Power, but to benefit mankind, and that there is no action of His life that is not characterised by infinite goodness and mercy.

The eager multitude on all sides throng and press Him, and He is ever ready to listen to them, ever a patient, impartial Judge. He is kind to all; but the little children and the poor are the objects of His especial tenderness. He delivers them out of their trouble. He comforts and encourages them; but He never flatters them with delusive hopes. He sacrifices Himself for them—for their good, not to gain popularity for Himself. He loves His disciples, and bears patiently with their ignorance, their rude, untaught ways. One of them betrays Him; He still speaks to him with gentleness, addressing him as “friend.” Another denies Him; He turns and looks upon him, and there is that in His glance which melts the very soul.

He loves His native land, and as He makes His way up the steep and rugged path to Calvary, He forgets His Own sorrows, and has a tear for the evils which He sees are about to overwhelm it. He has an immense and tender compassion for sinners; not only receiving them, but seeking them out, and winning them to repentance by the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Two of His disciples beg Him to allow them to command fire to come down from Heaven upon two cities which had refused to receive Him, and He replies: “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” *

The Pharisees ask Him to sentence to death the adulteress, and He replies: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” † And when He is left alone with her, with an immensity of compassion for that immense misery, He asks her, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” “No man, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” ‡

* St. Luke ix. 54-56.

† St. John viii. 7.

‡ *Ibid.* 10, 11.

My brethren, what a picture for us to contemplate! He is accused of being the "Friend of sinners"; but, my brethren, mark my words. To encounter this reproach a life of ordinary merit will not suffice, nor a life of purely human virtue. It is a sign of a goodness which can only be compared with the goodness of God.

He never thinks of Himself, but of the welfare of others. He leaves the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness to go after that which is lost, till He finds it. And, in the exercise of charity and love, His character has reached the highest point of perfection.

What shall we say of His humility? When the people in a moment of enthusiasm desired Him for their King, He hid Himself. When He healed the blind man, He charged him that he should "tell no man." Every word and every action show how absolute, how perfect is His self-command; so that when the Pharisees tried to entangle Him in His talk, "they could not find what they might do."

The simplicity of His mode of life we know from His Own words: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." * It is in vain that His bitterest enemies seek to find fault with the spotless Lamb of God; for not one can take up the challenge. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" † After having taught us by example every human virtue, the Lord Jesus gives us His precepts.

My Brethren, I need not explain to you who are here to-day the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The Church explains that continually; and all who have treasured in their hearts the teachings of the Church will be able to follow me now. Before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ many and many a book had been written dealing with the great problem of the welfare of mankind. Many and many a school of philosophy had been opened to sound the depths of human wisdom and impart that wisdom to

* St. Luke xi. 58.

† St. John viii. 46.

the world. Many and many an investigation had been made into the secrets of human nature—the origin of man, his duties, and his rights. But all these labours and all these studies resulted in nothing but uncertainty and contradiction, and an ever-gathering increasing gloom; so that even the noblest examples of intellectual attainment among men, weary of groping in the dark, abandoned the struggle in despair of ever finding the light.

It was then that Jesus Christ was born into the world; born of a people indifferent to philosophy and the fine arts—a people who, on that account, were held cheap by other nations. He was brought up at Nazareth, a city despised among the Jews for the ignorance of its inhabitants: “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”* His master a carpenter, for a school a carpenter’s shop. And yet, when he emerges from this workshop it is to found an empire! The name as yet unknown, an empire of unknown force, an empire of a kind never yet dreamed of by mankind—the empire of light and truth, intellect and love; immeasurable in its extent, indestructible, everlasting.

And where will Jesus establish His school of teaching? Rome and Athens had their well-known seats of learning—the Academy, the Lyceum, the Portico. Christ’s school of instruction is in the streets and ways, on the sea shore, on the mountain side. Who are His disciples? Each school of philosophy had its own disciples—scholars carefully initiated into the maxims professed by their distinct schools, adepts in all the subtleties of discussion and argument. Our Saviour, on the contrary, addresses Himself to humanity at large, and to all he says, “Come unto Me.” His school is all the world, His disciples all mankind.

What is His method of teaching? Does He base it upon the scientific methods generally practised? Does He adopt the irony of Socrates, the magic of Plato’s expression, or the fasci-

* St. John i. 46.

nation of his style? Does He invoke the aid of the art of rhetoric, or carry men captive with the charm of poetry, or play upon their imagination? No; these are the means employed by the masters and founders of the schools of philosophy. In fact, the teaching of man proceeds by means of induction and analysis; man is obliged to lean upon the resources of logic and argument, and thus to make use of the gifts God has given him to find out the truth and impart it to others; but this was not the way to make theology known to men. Mankind could not wait the issue of vain, uncertain, and subtle speculations, for a knowledge of their future destiny. One of the primary laws of physiology, which includes and resumes all other laws, is the law of movement. Movement is the law of our existence. We are placed in the world in a condition of progress from the beginning to the end. The progress which is required of us would become infinitesimal if we were to spend in reasoning and disputing the time which should be spent in action.

Again, I would ask, are scientific studies within the reach or understanding of the majority of mankind? Are they, moreover, always crowned with success? This kind of method, I repeat, is not the method employed by Jesus Christ. He addresses Himself to the faith of the people. Even a superficial study of the Gospel will suffice to show that Jesus seldom argued or discussed the truth of His sayings. He contents Himself with simple affirmation. Do not for a moment imagine that his affirmations of the truth are contrary to the dictates of reason. Far from it. They rest upon reason—a reason simple and easy to be understood, but which admits of no dispute.

That man was blind from his birth; you know it for yourselves, because he has always lived among you. He sees now, because I will that so it should be. That man has lain in the tomb three days; you know it for yourselves, for you mourn his loss. He is come back from death to life, because I will that so it should be.

This is man's preliminary instruction in faith. After this,

there is no possibility of dispute or argument ; there is no room for disbelief in a fact which has taken place before the very eyes. Thus from the lips of Jesus there fell constantly these simple affirmations of truth, so fruitful in meaning. His method was to work His marvellous works in the sight of the people—works so marvellous that they would have been incredible could their truth not have been proved by actual demonstration. Then, when their importance had been thus doubled, Jesus said, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you.” In other words, It is the truth which I am thus declaring unto you. This was the method employed by Jesus Christ, and, I ask you, is not this the most fitting method to be employed by the Son of God, Who had taken man’s nature upon Him, for the instruction of mankind ?

What shall we say now of His words, and of His doctrine ? It is now some nineteen centuries since these have been exposed to the strictest examination, the most searching criticism. No words and no doctrine have ever been so much discussed or criticised, from Julian the Apostate to Strauss, as the words and teaching of Jesus Christ. There has been no lack of talent, no lack of violence, in the attack. One thing only has been lacking, and that always—the victory.

Sometimes, intoxicated with the joy of some discovery, the critics have raised their pæan to unbelief ; but in its very utterance it was drowned by the renewed profession of faith on the part of Christendom, and their system disappeared.

Vanquished in its endeavours, but not in its hopes, hostile criticism again and again has taken the field with argument and hypothesis, subtlety and dispute : all have been pressed into the service to find a flaw, a contradiction, or an error, in the words of Christ ; but in vain.

Is there one of the ancient writers, or one of our own times, whose intelligence has not wavered or betrayed some weakness ? Christ could never waver in His teaching, because Christ is God, and therefore His teaching is unique in the annals of mankind. But not only are the words of Jesus true, they are complete.

There is nothing that can be added to them ; they solve every one of the problems which touch most nearly the destiny of human life.

The word of Christ is, and will always remain, the last word upon all the questions, either moral or religious, of the present hour ; of the future also, because it throws light back upon the origin of all things. Who, better than Christ, has spoken to us of God ? Who, better than Christ, has explained to us the nature and attributes of God ? They are explained with a direct simplicity, a loftiness of thought, an elevation of ideas, which make it sufficiently evident Whose Son the Saviour is.

Next, the words of Jesus reveal to us the mystery of humanity. It is through the abuse of liberty that sin and death have entered into the world. The law of expiation, and the mysteries which accompany it, are to bring us back to the good which we had forfeited.

If we turn to man's social condition and consider the relationship betwixt man and man, Christ, by one single word, overturned the ancient code of social law, and laid the foundation of Christian civilisation—our glory and our pride. That one sublime word, charity, has already found an echo in your hearts.

Charity is the only law of Christianity, because it includes in itself every other law, and under the administration of the law of charity the whole face of humanity is changed. Power, which had been the emanation of brutal force, becomes the representative of Divine Providence. Obedience is no longer an act of servility, but homage to One who is the source of all order. Wealth has its mission to the world, poverty its consolation. Good and evil are unequally distributed amongst men, because man is a free agent ; but charity fills up the gaps of inequality, and by its simple method resolves problems which defy all human solution.

It will suffice to compare the two Dispensations, the Old and the New, to understand what Jesus has done for men. There is no single provision of the Ancient Dispensation with regard to

man's social well-being, and especially with regard to his family life, which has not undergone a beneficial change by means of the teaching of Christ—a change which is not yet completed.

Moreover, it was impossible that this world alone could be all in all to man, so Christ implanted the hope in his heart which penetrates beyond the grave, which reaches up to the Heaven, which He promises to those who follow the path of virtue; while, on the other hand, there is the certainty of punishment for those who choose evil instead of good. It is this hope beyond the grave of another life which cuts the knot of every earthly difficulty.

Then, again, is there any idea of the future life more beautiful, more noble, more pure, more satisfying to the reason, than that of the resurrection of the body? The teaching of Christ fulfils our every want, moral and religious. The teaching of Christ makes plain to us our nature, our origin, the purpose of our life here, our destiny hereafter.

It is true that this doctrine contains deep mysteries; but can a doctrine treat of the Godhead, and not be full of mystery? The mysteries of the Christian religion are incomprehensible even to those who are ministers and stewards of those mysteries, because the mysteries are of God. For this reason the name of mystery is not fitly bestowed upon the enigmas and auguries of the ancient heathen rites, for the priests of idolatry knew and possessed the clue to them themselves, and purposely kept the people in darkness.

The real fact is that there are no mysteries but in the doctrine of Christ, because the doctrine of Christ is from Heaven—of those “secret things which belong unto the Lord our God.”

The universal testimony of mankind has been ratified by the opinion of the wise men of all generations, whose reasoning faculties, trained in the study of philosophy and law, have bowed in voluntary homage before the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hegel bids us observe that there is only one system which holds its ground—the doctrine of Jesus Christ. This doctrine endures throughout all ages, and wherever it it dissemi-

nated it is fruitful in moral perfection, it brings forth fruit in the true civilisation of mankind, because it is the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

My brethren, what are we to conclude from all this? I will tell you. When you find yourself confronted by one of the people who say, "Christ was a great Man, a great Philanthropist," you should reply, "That will not do. What you say is either too much or too little. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, then He is a madman—my lips will scarce pronounce the word—or an impostor. If Christ is a madman, then a madman is the wisest of men; then a madman can teach wisdom; a madman can set up the throne of wisdom upon the earth; a madman can rule all hearts, and become King of kings and Lord of lords."

If Christ is an impostor, how could an impostor not only impart virtue to mankind, but maintain it from generation to generation? There is no disputing the fact. There is no other conclusion open to human reason but that Christ is God. Human reason, which leads us to the Throne of God. Human reason which, through the sixty generations that have succeeded each other during nineteen centuries of Christianity—now in the form of the highest science, now in the form of the noblest art—teaches us to say, with St. Augustine and St. Thomas, "Jesus Christ is God, for He said, I am the Son of God."

Such is the testimony of true science. False science may do its utmost; it may labour night and day to disprove the Divinity of Christ, but the only result is to add another proof to a fact which is already proved beyond all doubt. Oh! how true it is that God alone is great. "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. . . . He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble." *

Then I would impress upon you to hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, paying no heed to the calumnies and attacks of an infidel and ignorant press; and you must not

* Isaiah xl. 22-24.

be "ashamed of it," but proud of it—not with the evil pride of a corrupt nature, but that of fervent gratitude to God.

Finally, do not forget to pray to God. Yes, my brethren, pray to the God of all wisdom, all truth, and all holiness. Pray to Him to enlighten us, that the eyes of our understandings may be opened: to join our hearts in one, to lift the veil of error from our minds, that we may see and know the "things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes."

O Lord Jesus, let Thy Word govern our minds, because Thou art the Wisdom of God.

O Lord Jesus, let Thy Word dwell in our hearts, because Thou art the Holiness of God.

O Lord Jesus, Incarnate Word of God, shew forth Thy glory now, that the world may behold Thy glory, which Thou hadst with the Father before the foundation of the world.

O Lord Jesus, hear my prayer, and plead for us now as Thou didst of old.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." †



VIII.—FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

THE PASSION.

MY BRETHREN,—“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.”* Yes, my brethren, these are the words by which I would direct your attention to Jesus dying upon the Cross for you to-day—a day which should be consecrated by tears of shame and remorse to the contemplation of the sufferings and death of our Saviour Christ.

All ye that pass along the thorny way of life, tarry awhile and think of the Way of Sorrows, traversed by Him in pain and agony, watered with His tears, bathed in the Blood which flowed from His sacred veins. It is as if our Saviour said, Behold and see; count My wounds; try and measure the depths of My anguish, the bitterness of My humiliation. “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.”

Let us not be disobedient to the commands of our dying Saviour; let us follow Him to Calvary—to the scene of His sufferings and death. Let us pass in review every well-known record of suffering, and see if it can be compared with His sorrow. But to whom, then, can we liken Christ, or what likeness can be compared unto Him? Take any of the types from the Holy Scriptures, and see if they come near to the sufferings of the Saviour. Abel is but a faint shadow of His innocence; Cain, of the fury of His enemies; Job, of the afflictions which He bore so patiently; Isaac, bearing the wood of his sacrifice; or Joseph, sold by his brethren; or David, conspired against by a rebellious, undutiful son, and cursed by Shimei, who cast stones at him as he went up the mountain side. All these are but imperfect, insufficient types and images of the sufferings by

* Lam. i. 12.

which, for our sakes, the Lord Jesus was afflicted and oppressed. Therefore our search among the types of Scripture has been in vain.

There is no earthly suffering on record that can equal the sufferings of Christ. Jesus Christ can compare only with Himself. There is no sorrow like unto His sorrow! And now, my brethren, what is it that you expect from me to-day? Isaiah, seated amid the ruins of Jerusalem, could not find even in the language of inspiration words adequately to describe the sufferings which He foretold; and is it for me to dare to speak to you upon the subject of the sufferings and death of Christ? And yet I must needs do so, and when words fail me, and all human expressions are powerless, we can but pray and weep.

My brethren, there were many ends to be accomplished by the sufferings related in the Gospels, which our Saviour willed to undergo for the atonement of our sins. And as there are sins of the heart, sins of the spirit, and sins of the body, the Lord Jesus chose to expiate the sins of the heart by His agony in Gethsemane; He chose to expiate the sins of the spirit by His humiliation before the tribunals; He chose to expiate the sins of the flesh by the scourging which He willed to endure, by His bonds and imprisonment, by His Crucifixion on the Mount of Calvary.

He expiated the sins of the heart in the Garden of Gethsemane. We know that out of the heart of man "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."* Jesus Christ expiated these by the agony of His Soul in Gethsemane. Behold Him in the garden. Having withdrawn from the disciples about "a stone-cast," he advances a little further among the trees and shrubs of the garden in that silent solitude. It was night; the shades of darkness were creeping over the land, and the Lord Jesus, wearied, fell on the ground and prayed. He is "sore amazed and very heavy." We may imagine the deathly pallor of His countenance, the

* St. Matt. xv. 19.

shuddering of His limbs, the rapid beating of His heart. He rises from the ground. Perhaps, Very Man, as well as Very God, it was the intense desire of the human side of His nature to find someone to sympathise with Him—some one heart into which He can pour His grief—which had made Him bid His disciples watch, that He might find them ready in the hour of the extreme bitterness of His anguish. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me.” *

But, alas! there is no one to comfort Him, for they are all asleep. Even though He had twice bidden them watch, yet not one hour could they watch with Him. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. He came and found them asleep again. “And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.” †

My brethren, what is this new language uttered by Christ? But a short time ago, by the tomb of Lazarus, before the miracle was accomplished, Jesus lifted up His eyes and said: “Father, I thank Thee that Thou has heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always.” ‡ Now He prays three times in earnest supplication that this cup might pass from Him; and, what is even yet more strange and wonderful, God the Father does *not* remove from his beloved Son this bitter cup of sorrow; and Jesus adds, in resignation to the Divine will, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” § And yet we must not wonder as we contemplate the agony of God Incarnate, because the same love which had stooped to take our human nature had taken with it its burden of weakness and suffering.

My brethren, what was the source of our Saviour’s agony in the garden? Was it the foreknowledge of the sufferings which were coming upon Him? It is not true to say that the foreknowledge of grief diminishes the pang of suffering; or, at

* St. Matt. xxvi. 38.

† St. Matt. xxvi. 44.

‡ St. John xi. 41, 42.

§ St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

least, it is not always true. In anticipation the imagination can clothe it with new terrors. At that moment there rose up before our Saviour's mind all the sufferings He was about to endure—the shame and spitting, the mockery, the crown of thorns, the Cross, the nails. In fearful array they made their assault upon His tender heart, and although, when the moment of trial came, they would be endured each in turn, in anticipation, in this union of horror, they have power to fill His Soul with such unutterable anguish as to throw him into an agony. Yet I venture to say this was not the real cause of His overwhelming grief; because we know that He had revealed to His disciples openly His desire for death: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"*

There is a profound mystery and a source far deeper than the dread of pain and suffering, whence spring the sorrows of Jesus. They are caused by His horror of sin—that offence to the holiness of God; by the wilful blindness of those souls which He knew, in His foreknowledge, would yet, in spite of all, rush on to their perdition.

Of sin!—Ah! who can say what suffering is caused to the Holy Jesus by the sight of sin. From the first sin of Adam to the last of the Antichrist none are hid from Him; all pass before His all-seeing gaze. Try and call up before your mind all the sins which have ever been committed since the beginning of the world, which are being committed now, which will be committed hereafter to the very end of the time. All the sins against God—blasphemy, idolatry, irreverence. All the sins against man—open and secret murders, assassination, the sins of uncleanness, the sins of nations, the sins of individuals. All, all are before Him; on the right hand, on the left, before and behind, nothing but this appalling spectacle of sin; the sins of all time, of every age, from the father upon the children, from generation to generation, in one ever-increasing overwhelming torrent: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."†

* St. Luke xii. 50.

† Isaiah liii. 6.

This was the cause of the anguish of the Saviour's mind, and well would it be for us if we thought of sin as Jesus did—if He could implant in our hearts the same abhorrence of it.

And as we contemplate that agony in the garden we may find a motive for the deepest remorse, and learn from Him something of the nature of true penitence. To weep for the future: here is a third cause for the anguish of our Saviour—which, indeed, puts the climax to it. The sorrow of Jesus reaches its climax in the contemplation of the irreparable loss of souls. He suffered for our salvation—the salvation of mankind; and in spite of all his suffering He foresees that many souls will, through their own wilfulness, be lost.

My brethren, if we would understand something of our Saviour's anguish, we must first of all enter into the ineffable tenderness of His love. We have seen the Lord Jesus shed tears before the grave of Lazarus; we have seen Him touched by the affliction of the poor widow of Nain; we have seen him weep over the calamities impending over Jerusalem, His own ungrateful country; and now, as He ponders upon souls who will not profit by their redemption, "bought with a price"—the price of His Blood—it is as if He said: Is it in vain that I have suffered these things? Is My life of poverty and hardship to be in vain? In vain My humiliation, sufferings, My cruel death upon the Cross, to win the redemption of the world, to pay the ransom of men from sin and death, if they will not be redeemed—to work the salvation of souls, if they will not be saved. This is the cause of the agony of Jesus; so great that, as we read in the Gospels, "His sweat was as it were great great drops of blood falling down to the ground." *

Oh, earth, earth, earth! That Blood was shed for me! Oh, my God! grant that it may not have been shed in vain! And as we think of the sufferings of our Saviour, and how great has been our resistance to the grace of God, shall we not exclaim, "Oh, Lord Jesus! overwhelmed in a sea of sorrow, who will

console Thee?" Angels of God, hasten from Heaven to strengthen Him; and you too, my brethren, can share in their consolation. You have each of you a soul redeemed by His Blood; see that you lose it not. You see around you your fellow Christians, your brothers and sisters in Christ, trembling on the verge of destruction; bring them back to Christ.

Here then you see, by His agony in the garden, at how great a cost the ransom of the sins of the human heart—all inordinate, and unlawful affections—was paid. And let us learn yet another lesson from it: to bear with patience the sorrows and sufferings of life; to turn to God our Father, and while we may say with the Saviour, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," it is not for us to add "even unto death," because our earthly sufferings can never approach His, or reach that point; but, whatever they are, the least we can do, with such an Example before us, is to bow the head in submission, and say with Him: "Thy will, not mine be done."

* * * * *

My Brethren, there is yet another class of sin: the sins of the spirit—pride, vanity, the love of power. Now we shall see the Lord Jesus expiate these in His voluntary humiliation. He rises from the scene of His greatest anguish. From the very immensity of His sorrow He seems to have gathered new strength; He approaches the Apostles in Divine majesty of demeanour, and saith unto them: "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me."* The Lord Jesus does not flee from the peril of His position. On the contrary, by the calm resignation with which He advances to meet the traitor Judas, He would have us learn how to meet the fierce conflicts of life, so that, being prepared for them by prayer, we may know how to bear ourselves in the hour of peril, putting our whole trust in God.

Meanwhile, the great multitude with swords and staves to take him, come forward with Judas at their head. What, Judas?

* St Matt. xxvi. 46.

—one of the Apostles? Surely he comes now to bear witness to the holy life of the Saviour—to the wondrous works that He has done! Oh! depth of degradation of the human heart! Judas has been to the enemies of Christ, to covenant with them for thirty pieces of silver to betray his Master into their hands.

“Hail, Master,” he said to Jesus, and kissed Him. These words are like a dagger in the heart of Jesus. It is as if a father had been betrayed by his son, or a friend by the familiar friend in whom he trusted. And Jesus had tried every means to soften the heart of Judas. He had kneeled before him, to wash his feet. He had given him His Own Body and Blood to eat in the Last Supper. Now He tries once again; and with the ineffable sweetness with which he was wont to move all hearts, He saith unto Judas, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?”* And then, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?”† A kiss! the pledge of love, and loyalty, and friendship! These words, which would have melted a heart of stone, have no effect upon Judas.

Ah! Judas, this deed of blackest treachery will soon be followed (but too late) by the bitterest repentance, and unutterable despair. Impious man, if one fearful consolation can console thee, it is thine. Thou wilt not be alone in thy guilt and sacrilege. Thou hast set the example of a crime unknown even in the depths of hell; but, alas! it will have many followers. Say, Angels of the Sanctuary, who guard the Altar of Christ, have ye never turned with horror from the approach of those sacrilegious souls, who dare, while in a state of unrepented sin, to partake of the Holy Sacrament? The outward appearance may be one of reverence, but with the kiss of Judas they are prepared to sell their Lord; not for thirty pieces of silver, but for a no less contemptible price—the price of man’s esteem.

What shall I say to these?—Depart ye traitors from the Presence of Christ? Nay, my brethren, rather let my tongue

* St. Matt. xxvi. 50.

† St. Luke xxii. 48.

cleave to the roof of my mouth! The Lord Jesus, in spite of your sin, which can yet be atoned for by repentance, is still your Friend; and He would say to you by my mouth, "My Blood, which was shed for you, shall plead for your forgiveness. Judas offended Me less by his treachery than by his despair. Return unto Me with a broken and contrite heart, and I will give you peace."

Hardly has the sign been given than Jesus is surrounded by the band of men and officers. But if Jesus is to die, it is because He wills it. At His words, "I am He," the armed multitude went backward and fell to the ground; and He first heals the ear of Malchus before He suffers Himself to be led away captive to Jerusalem.

Scarce five days have elapsed since He entered that same city amid the triumphant acclamations of the people, who cut down branches from the trees to strew His path. It is the same multitude now who scoff at Him and deride Him. What is there more fickle than the popular applause? How quick the change from the cry of "Hosanna!" to that of "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

Jesus is first of all brought before Annas, the High Priest. Look at Annas, the enemy of Christ, seated in the pretence of a tribunal, surrounded by the scribes and Pharisees. With a mocking smile he interrogates Jesus, Who replies with patient gentleness; but nevertheless, "one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of the hand."* Now we all know that in the world this is looked upon as a mortal affront that can only be expiated with blood; but the Lord Jesus bears it patiently.

Jesus is next sent bound unto Caiaphas, and a kind of trial is instituted. In every well-ordered trial there should be an advocate for the accused; but no one comes forward to defend Jesus; they have all hid themselves away. Where are the Apostles? Have they also forsaken Him? One has betrayed Him; another, alas! is about to deny Him. Alas! instead of

* St. John xviii. 22

their witness for Him, "false witnesses did rise up: they laid to My charge things that I knew not." * The mock trial continues, and the iniquitous judge asks Jesus: "I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." † At these words, which sink down into our hearts with an awful significance, "the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold now, ye have heard His blasphemy." ‡

The blasphemy is with thee, iniquitous, unjust judge! and a day will come when He, to Whom, in His humiliation, thou wouldst not listen, will come to be thy Judge—the Judge of all nations, and especially the Judge of those that "pervert all equity." §

Then the cry begins to arise from the people, "He is guilty of death." It is the accepted custom that when once the sentence of death has been pronounced, the accused person, even if justly condemned, is entitled to be treated with respect. But the treatment of our Saviour forms a conspicuous exception to this rule, for we read with a shudder the Gospel narrative: "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands." ||

But there is a measure of bitterness greater even than this. There is no deeper wound that can be inflicted upon the heart than the knowledge that the friends we love are ashamed of their former friendship with us. St. Peter, who had protested "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee," ¶ was awaiting, trembling, without in the courtyard of the palace, the result of the treachery of Judas. Perhaps his anxiety showed itself in his countenance, for a damsel came unto him, and said unto him, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he

* Psalm xxxv. 11.

† St. Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

‡ *Ibid.* 65.

§ Micah iii. 9.

|| St. Matt. xxvi. 67.

¶ St. Matt. xxvi. 35.

denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." * And twice again—three successive times in all—he denied with an oath, saying, "I know not the man."

Ah! unhappy man, has the fear of men brought thee to such a pass as this? Alas! how many apostates to the faith have succumbed since, and will succumb, to the despicable fear of the world's opinion. For fear of an ironical smile, of a scoff, or a jest, how many a time have we denied Christ? How many times, the slaves of this abject fear, have we said, "I know not the man," by our actions; and, lest the world should laugh at us, have been ashamed to acknowledge Christ. What if at the last day Christ will not acknowledge us? "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His Own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." †

But if, haply, we have imitated St. Peter in his fall, let us also imitate him in his repentance. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter," and that look touched him to the very heart's core, for, as we read, "he went out and wept bitterly." ‡ When we have sinned, let us remember that our Lord is looking at us; or, better still, let us think of it beforehand, and then we shall not dare to commit the sin.

At daybreak the Lord Jesus is sent by Pilate to Herod. They were at enmity, but that day they were made friends—all trace of the feud disappeared, and they became united in their desire to persecute their innocent victim. Herod, we know, had been desirous to see Jesus of a long season, "because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." § But Christ does not perform miracles to gratify idle curiosity, nor will He exchange any words with Herod; and when Herod questioned Him He answered nothing. ||

Baffled and disappointed, "Herod, with his men of war, set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a

* St. Matt. xxvi. 69, 70. † St. Luke ix. 26. ‡ St. Luke xxii. 26.

§ St. Luke xxiii. 8. || *Ibid.* 9.

gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate." * It must then have been mid-day when the Saviour retraced His steps along the road to the spot where a still more painful scene was awaiting Him—where the base Hebrew multitude, who had received countless benefits at His hands, are now clamouring for His death. But to all the accusations of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.

Oh! Lord Jesus, how eloquent is Thy silence in condemning our eagerness in self-defence when we are accused! He does not open His lips to justify Himself, while we are ready instantly to meet accusation with accusation, injurious words with injurious words, hatred with hatred. Oh! Lord Jesus, help me henceforward to imitate Thy patience—to bear my cross, whatever it may be, in silence; and when my strength fails me I will take it to Thee, and to Thee alone will pour out the sorrows of my heart.

But what cries are these which are echoing through the air? "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Is there any greater humiliation for an innocent man than to know that some vile specimen of humanity—an outlaw, an assassin, "a notable prisoner," as the Holy Scriptures tell us Barabbas was—is not only compared with him, but preferred before him? And this bitter humiliation was also endured by the Holy Saviour.

Pilate, the judge, is convinced of the innocence of the Prisoner before him, but has not the courage to pronounce Him guiltless, and has recourse to a subterfuge. It was the custom to release a prisoner at the feast, "and there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection" (St. Mark xv. 7). This is the man Pilate chooses to set side by side with the Lord Jesus, while he asks the multitude: "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus Which is called Christ?" †

All nature stands aghast at the parallel. But the people who

* St. Luke xxiii. 11.

† St. Matt. xxvii. 17.

had been suborned by the chief priests and scribes cried out: Not this Man but Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus Which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. "Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? . . . We have no King but Cæsar." *

In vain Pilate enquires, "What evil hath He done?" They cry out the more exceedingly, "Let Him be crucified." "I am innocent of the Blood of this just Person," is Pilate's next feeble protest. "His Blood be on us and on our children," † is the unanimous and fearful reply. Unhappy race! Yes, the Blood of Christ will be upon you, and upon your children—an indelible brand; and your dispersion throughout the world, while yet preserving a distinct nationality in the midst of other nations, will remain an ever-living witness to the Divinity of Christ.

Pilate tries yet one more expedient, thinking to satisfy the fury of the people by condemning the Lord Jesus to be scourged. Iniquitous, vacillating judge! If the Prisoner is guilty, why seek to release Him? Proclaim His innocence and die with Him if need be! But in this act of cowardice, Pilate is a type of the modern practice of sacrificing justice to fear, ambition, interest, or expediency. And after this sentence he pretends to wash his hands of the Blood of Jesus!

Yes, he is innocent of that Blood—as innocent as the executioners who "come about Him like dogs" thirsting for His Blood, who tear His clothes from Him, who bind Him to the column and let loose upon Him a tempest of blows till blood pours from every vein—the whole Prætorium is inundated with blood. And it seems as if upon each one of us the Lord Jesus fixes His patient gaze: "For your sakes, for your salvation, I suffer thus." The soldiers add insult to injury. They "platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews!" Is it enough yet to satisfy the cruel, bloodthirsty mob? Pilate vainly thinks so; he "went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring

* St. John xix. 15.

† St. Matt. xxvii. 25.

Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!"*

My brethren, suffer me to take up the same words, "Behold the Man!" Let us listen to the lesson the Lord Jesus would teach us by the heartrending sight of His suffering. In the pride of his heart, man tried to raise himself into something above human nature, and listened to the tempter's words: "Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." To expiate this pride, Jesus has lost almost the semblance of a human being. "I am become a worm and no man: a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people." "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men."

Oh! ye, who think to win Heaven without either effort or sacrifice, look at Jesus, and let nothing seem too hard to do for One Who has endured all this for you. *Eecce Homo!* Behold the Man! Let this word be to us the watchword of our salvation. At the last day it will not be "Behold the Man!" but "Behold the Judge!"

And who, my brethren, shall abide the day of His coming, who shall stand when He appeareth? if at one glance from Him the bad angels fell from Heaven. Oh! my brethren, for the love of Jesus, for the salvation of our souls, let us not delay one hour. Behold the Man! Behold Jesus the Lord! let us make haste to seek Him.

My brethren, we have seen the expiation of the sins of the heart in the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; of the sins of the spirit in the humiliation before the tribunal of Pilate. There is yet a third class—the sins of the flesh. The expiation of these was begun in the Prætorium with the scourging, the crown of thorns, the buffeting of the soldiers; and was completed in the three hours' agony on the Mount of Calvary.

* St. John xix. 4-5.

Pilate's first act of cowardice, by which he hoped to escape responsibility, is followed by another which remains the everlasting record of his shame. "The voices of them" (the people) "and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." * And they took Jesus and led Him away. "And He bearing His Cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha." †

Yes, Jesus went forth from Jerusalem with the two thieves who were condemned with Him, with a great noise of trumpets, accompanied by the rude soldiery, followed by the shouting, hooting crowd. "Lord, Lord! whither art Thou going? "To die for you—for My children. Think what I have suffered for your sakes. Think of My exceeding love." And as He treads His path of suffering they meet a man, "Simon, a Cyrenian," coming out of the country; and the soldiers, fearing lest Jesus should sink under the weight of the Cross, "compel" him (the word suggests that there was some resistance on the part of Simon) to bear the Cross.

Is there one of us whose heart does not thrill as we read this incident? Is there one of us who does not exclaim: "Oh! if I had but been there, how gladly would I have carried the Cross for Jesus!" My brethren let us think rather how often, when some little cross has presented itself in the path of our life, we have pushed it away from us. Oh, my Saviour! never, never again. However thickly henceforward the path of life may be strewn with crosses, I take them up gladly; and the remembrance of the bitter weight of Thine will make them all seem light to me.

In that great company of people who follow Him, there are women which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." ‡ Not for His Own, but for the sorrows of others, there is always a place

* St. Luke xxiii. 23, 24. † St. John xix. 17. ‡ St. Luke xxiii. 28.

in the Saviour's tender heart. Oh, my God! if Thy Divine justice is manifest in the green tree—the symbol of innocence—what will it be in the dry—the emblem of the hardened sinner. Lord Jesus, help me that I may not be like the dry tree, destined for the everlasting flames prepared for the devil and his angels.

“And when they were come to the place.” Yes, the way of sorrows has reached its terrible termination; here is the spot where the Lord Jesus is to die. “And they crucified Him.” The nails pierce His sacred hands and feet. Oh, my Saviour! were not the sorrows of Gethsemane, and of the tribunal of Pilate, enough, without this last and fearful addition on the Mount of Calvary? They raise the Cross, and let it fall with a rude jerk into the hole prepared for it. It was then that all nature sympathised with that awful moment of suffering: the sun's light was dimmed, and a mysterious darkness crept over all the land.

While Jesus hung there in mortal agony upon the Cross, the soldiers, after parting His garments, and casting lots upon His vesture, mocked and derided Him. Jesus lifts His eyes to Heaven, and opens His lips. Is it to call down the wrath of Heaven upon His persecutors? No; the hour of justice is past, and the reign of mercy has already begun. He opens His lips to make a prayer for that mercy which He has won for all mankind: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

But, alas! do we not know what we do when we commit sin? Have we not the law of God and His Commandments for our guide? With shame and sorrow we acknowledge our faults, and do Thou, O Lord Jesus, show us Thy mercy. Set us at the last at Thy right hand, and say to us, as Thou saidst to the repentant thief upon the Cross: “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” Hear, my brethren, another word from the Cross: “I thirst.”

Yes, indeed, there can be no doubt as to the physical thirst in a body torn and exhausted with so much suffering. But still greater is His thirst for the salvation of human souls. Ah!

how many a soul has been torn from Him whom He has died to save. And for my own part, have I never led a soul astray? Oh! Lord Jesus, give me grace to lead back to Thee as many as I have caused to stray from Thy fold.

Again, forgetful of His Own sufferings, He thinks still of others. "Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" *

To the very foot of the Cross the Blessed Virgin had followed Jesus, never to leave Him till His sufferings were over; and we must learn to follow Him like her, not for one hour, not for one day only, but to-day and to-morrow, always and for ever. Then, with one glance which embraced all past ages, included the time then present to Him, and measured the long vista of the future, He exclaimed, "It is finished!"

All was finished: the Divine Justice satisfied, the work of Divine mercy accomplished, the malice of His enemies satiated; for the cup of sorrow and suffering has been drained to the very dregs. The Son of Man, Who is also the Son of God, bows His head; His eyes grow dim, the lips are closed in death; and, as the Scriptures tell us, "He bowed the head, and gave up the ghost." †

He can rest now. His sublime work of the redemption of the world is accomplished—His thirty years of a life of poverty on earth, His three years of unwearied ministry. He dies, persecuted by His enemies, abandoned by His friends. Ay, and there was a dread moment, hidden in the ineffable mystery of Divine justice, when the cry went up from the Cross to the Eternal Father: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" ‡

For us men, and for our salvation, Jesus is dead. For us,

* St. John xix. 25-27.

† St. John xix. 30.

‡ St. Mark xv. 34.

because He so loved us. Shall we then not also love Him? Let us fill our thoughts, our minds, our hearts to-day with the contemplation of Christ upon the Cross, for His death is our life, His Sacrifice upon the Altar of Justice our pardon and peace with God. He has shed His Blood for us; shall we deny Him our tears?

But it is not only tears—a barren grief—that we must offer to our Lord to-day. Rather let it be a resurrection from a death of sin to a life of truth and righteousness. Did he not say, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me?”* Oh! Lord Jesus, fulfil Thy Word in us, and draw us all who are here to-day unto Thee! And if there be anyone amongst us, who, insensible to Thy example, is still at enmity with his brother; if there be any heart that cherishes envy, hatred, or malice within itself—any held fast in the toils of vice, or bound by the chain of sin—oh! blessed Lord Jesus, by a new miracle to-day, win such back to Thy love, that none may have heard unmoved the story of Thy Cross and Passion! For none may Thy bitter sufferings have been in vain; in vain for none Thy precious Blood poured forth.

Let Thy blessing be upon us all; and for those who have strayed from the fold, fetch them home, Blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be made one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.



* St. John xii. 32.

IX.

THE SUPERNATURAL.

MY BRETHREN,—Since the existence of Christianity the question as to the relations between reason and faith, science and religion, have presented themselves over and over again before the minds of men; but until the eighteenth century the enemies of religion had never ventured to assert that the line of antagonism was so marked between the two that it was an impossibility to reconcile the claims on either side. From time to time reason has made war upon faith—now upon this, and now upon that point of dogma or morality; but it has never attempted to touch upon the question of the supernatural, for the sole reason that it was supernatural. Modern science, on the contrary, sets up boldly a claim to be the expression of a more determined policy—nothing less than that of forcing the world by one supreme effort away from the blind faith of the primitive age of the Church; in other words, from belief in revealed truth.

It is not to be supposed that the champions of the Christian faith have allowed such an attack to remain unopposed, without adopting the usual methods for combating it. The most simple of these is to start with the assumption that the existence of the supernatural is an ascertained fact, and then to support it, as other facts are supported, with reliable witness and incontrovertible proofs.

The champion of Christianity takes up his position thus. He bids the adversaries of religion approach the cradle of the supernatural—that is, Christianity—and he addresses them in the language of critical science: “Observe for yourselves the origin of the supernatural; observe its history. Never man spake like this Man, Who is Christ our Saviour. Never did greater force result from, to all appearance, greater weakness than Christianity. Are you not constrained to admit that this is a unique fact in the

annals of history?—that such a fact, being in itself outside every natural condition, is a supernatural fact? ”

Why, then, will you not believe in the supernatural? But the rationalists are not destitute of formulas with which to escape from the claims of faith; and these formulas are nothing but axioms produced and asserted without proof. The first of these formulas, which indeed comprises all the others, is that they do not admit faith in the supernatural because it is incompatible with the spirit of science.

Then there is a more especial formula: that is, that the supernatural is an absurdity altogether, and therefore faith is an absurdity. There are others who say that science does not take into account what is supernatural, and therefore can have no relations with faith. Others, that the supernatural cannot be proved by the technical process of their methods of science, therefore it is impossible to believe without first abdicating the natural dignity of man. Others affirm that faith is a stumbling-block in the way of liberty of thought, and is in itself an act of servility. And they all unite in declaring that faith is nothing but a temporary provision made for mankind while in the infancy of thought; but that science is the natural condition of man when he has attained to the perfect development of his faculties.

My brethren, I would this morning propose to examine each one of these objections, to see how much truth they really contain; for it is not the will of God that the dignity of man should be compromised by a sincerity of belief in His servants. It is not the will of God that the faith of Christendom should wane, or that the honour and truth of the Evangelists should be called in question. It is because we bow the head in lowly adoration in the worship of God that we can stand fearless face to face with our fellow-men. We have learnt from our forefathers ever to choose martyrdom rather than slavery, and the most contemptible of all slavery is the slavery of the mind.

My brethren, the first objection raised is as follows: “ We do not acknowledge the existence of the supernatural, because it is incompatible with the spirit of science.” “ But why is it incom-

patible with the spirit of science?" And the answer is: "It is easy to see why; but you are so full of prejudice, that it would be a fruitless task to attempt to cast light into the depths of your unreasoning faith. The condition of your mind resembles that of the eyes of a man more or less affected by disease, or because of some natural defect; they cannot distinguish colours.

"But," I answer, "are you sure that you are not affected by a contrary disease? If I succeed in showing you that, in the depths of your understanding, there lurks a predisposed negation of every dogma, a predisposed negation of accepted truth, your condition is not better than ours; the ground in your case is not less occupied by prejudice than ours; and you must be ready to show yourselves open to conviction, with the same alacrity, the same disposition to hear reason, the same candour of admission, that you expect from us."

Very well, this is my position. In the depths of our hearts there is a firm belief in the supernatural. In the depths of yours there is the absolute negation of any such belief. In fact, I open one of the treatises written by your wise men, and I find that the key-note to their treatment of the Gospel as a mere legend is the assertion that there is no such thing as the supernatural. The supernatural is a contradiction—the supernatural is an impossibility.

I ask, *Is* this assertion self-evident—is it proved? The men of science lay it down as a rule—they give it out as a diatribe, not established by argument, but merely the result of modern scientific investigation—that there is no such thing as the supernatural, and they then advance this negation in the august name of science and criticism. Not that it has been demonstrated either by science or criticism; but because, according to the code of the nineteenth century, it is a law of history, it is a law of philosophy, that there is no mystery of the faith which is not supernatural. This is the word of command, and to this word of command they give the name of impartial criticism.

Now, as they themselves aver that it is unnecessary to prove this word of command, we may turn the tables upon them, and

cast in their teeth their scornful treatment of us. The liberty and independence of which they boast is nothing, after all, but the right they arrogate to themselves of taking for granted what cannot be proved. If we are the slaves of faith, they are the slaves of unbelief. If we see everything through the medium of Christian dogma, they see everything through the medium of the dogma they have made to themselves—the dogma that belief in the supernatural is an impossibility. Our positions are therefore equal.

Granting that there is no compatibility between the scientific spirit and faith, the mind of the faithful Christian can at least claim to be as unfettered, as logical, as that of the rationalist who is the servant of science. But, after all, the Christian faith is no stranger to the word science in all its significance, in all its importance, because for many a long century, stretching far behind us into the past, there have been men such as Origen, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Anselm, Bacon, and Leibnitz, who have been able clearly to demonstrate the compatibility of faith with the spirit of science.

The scientific spirit is the spirit of science, but we must see to what kind of science it appertains. The rationalists speak of their science. Let us see what kind of science it is. We know that it aspires to the claim of critical science. St. Thomas tells us that science is certainly grounded on the demonstration of certain self-evident principles. Science is no doubt a constructed edifice; but every edifice must have a foundation, and in science this foundation consists of the certain principles upon which it rests. We therefore have the right to ask the rationalists on what principles they rest their science, which they call critical? We have seen them for ourselves. They admit that their point of departure is the negation of the supernatural, and that upon this point they say with Rénan, "Science looks upon this question as solved," because they consider it a self-evident axiom.

Then they must admit that, even in the nineteenth century, the proofs of the supernatural, even when called in question,

can make an impression upon a serious mind, and the belief in the supernatural may become a source of conviction founded upon reasonable and not frivolous grounds. Keeping only to this minimum of statement, how can we explain the audacity with which they ridicule those who believe in the supernatural? To treat those who differ from them, as the rationalists are wont to do, as ignorant impostors or fools, is not a proof of good taste in itself, nor a solid form of argument.

That side of the human race which is termed in scorn "the simple" will quickly console itself if it is proved that its learned adversaries have no reason on their side. And is it not a proof of their having put themselves outside the pale of reason, if they make profession of a science the principles of which are neither self-evident nor yet proved?

Belief in the supernatural dates back nineteen centuries, and if we may not claim for it the right of prescription, we need not, at all events, forget the other maxim, "*Auctoris est probare.*" The burden of proof lies with the disputant; it is for him to prove that the supernatural is an impossible belief, but this they have not been able to do. They have not done it yet, and they will not be able to do so. The means by which they choose to arrive at their conclusion are neither in accordance with reason nor justice; therefore, instead of saying that there is no compatibility between the supernatural and scientific truth, they ought to say that the supernatural is altogether contrary to science. This position is more or less favourable to them, and more advantageous for us, speaking on the side of Christianity.

In the first place, there is no occasion for inquietude if we are accused of servility, because our adversaries are themselves slaves of the dogma of the negation of the supernatural. In the second place, there is no occasion for inquietude if the inferiority of our science is pointed out to us, because the accusation is made by people whose science is not true science. Nor have we any reason to dread a discussion upon faith, which is in accordance with the dictates of reason: "Which is your reason-

able service," * says St. Paul; and St. Augustine, "Search out what is reasonable in your faith." For this reason we have always invited, and always shall invite, the rationalists to meet us on the true ground of the argument.

Is belief in the supernatural possible or not? Analyse it; resolve it to its elements; see if there is any contradiction in the principle it enunciates and the scientific spirit. That is all that we ask for—a sincere, accurate, and loyal search for truth. But instead of this, what has been the practice of rationalism? It has rejected the doctrine enjoined by the Church of belief in the supernatural. It has not chosen to engage in a fair fight, refusing to recognise where the point at issue really lay. It has set up imaginary objections of its own creation, more or less removed from the truth, and has then, from these, drawn its conclusions against the teaching of the Church.

It has, in fact, pursued the same course as St. Augustine, who said, "I set up a phantom instead of the Church, and made war upon it." We have a right to put the matter upon its true grounds. We condemn the objections of the rationalists because belief in the supernatural has ever won the suffrage of the greatest men—even those gifted with the most keen and penetrating understanding.

These, the men of marked intellectual capacity, have always agreed with Rénan, that they do not choose to argue the point except with the theologian or polemical divine; for these have the right to show that they have studied it in the scientific spirit. But let us descend to the individual points of objection. The boldest of our assailants declare that belief in the supernatural is an absurdity. But why should there be opposition between the finite and the infinite? Granted that both exist, you have next to explain their relative position to each other: how the finite was produced out of the infinite; how the finite stops on the boundary of the infinite, and becomes merged in it. If the supernatural system is nothing less than a fuller revelation

* Rom. xii. 1.

of God to man, how is it possible to establish a contradiction between Christ and the supernatural? The one revelation has another added to it. Where is the absurdity of this?

“But,” it may urged, “science does not take these things into account at all. It has nothing to do with faith. Science has its own sphere of phenomena and laws, cause and effect. The botanist makes a collection of plants, the mineralogist of stones, the entomologist, insects; the student of anatomy studies a corpse in the anatomical lecture-rooms; the politician, how best to promote the welfare of the people. They neither affirm nor deny anything connected with the supernatural, they simply ignore it.”

My friends, it seems to me that this science of yours is a little short-sighted. In the pursuit of these specialities that you have enumerated to me, has the scientist never found himself face to face with God? Physical laws will not suffice to explain every phenomenon. There are the laws of origin; there are the final causes, which cannot be touched upon without trenching upon the authority of the Church, and which it is difficult to elucidate without the light of faith.

“But,” I hear someone say, “your belief in the supernatural cannot be proved by the process of induction, and therefore it is not scientific.” My brethren, in treating of the supernatural we must keep two things very distinct in our minds—the idea and the fact. As, then, the supernatural can be contemplated under two aspects, it is comprehensible; therefore it is scientific. There is a mysterious link between the higher and lower systems of the universe—the seen and the unseen. It is this link upon which real genius knows how to put its finger, and thus was formulated the great system of scholastic theology which determined the relations of faith and reason.

If we cannot fathom the full depth of the idea of the supernatural, it does not on that account cease to be scientific, because it is surrounded by a halo of light, and that halo of light is the system to which it belongs. But, besides this, the supernatural comprises certain indisputable facts; and for this reason,

pre-eminently, belief in the supernatural is in accordance with the laws of science. The existence of Jesus Christ can be proved, as the existence of Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon.*

His Divinity is the province of theology, but His human life can be discussed and proved with as much certainty as that of Zoroaster, Confucius, Mahomet. His Gospel—a book like all other books—was first inscribed on parchment, then translated into all the known languages of the world, and reproduced in millions of copies. It contains prophecies, and prophecies are, in other words, facts, first of all foretold, and then accomplished. It contains the account of miracles, and a miracle is a fact which is a combination of two facts, which succeed each other in order, but in order of a different kind—the one natural, the other supernatural; both are, however, still facts. What is there more rational than this? And why will not the rationalist learn from history?

Let the man of science make what research may seem good to him. Let him interrogate the dust by the excavation of ancient ruins; let him make the corpses of the Egyptian mummies reveal their secrets; let him interpret the stones of the palace, the marble of the temple. The supernatural has nothing to fear from all this; but at least let there be an end of the accusation that it is not of scientific origin.

We will next consider the other accusation: that the supernatural is contrary to the spirit of liberty. My brethren, the first law of the human understanding, the very essence of it, is *liberty!* The mind of man is essentially free. It can never be subjected, either by external force or by moral persuasion. It knows no restraining limit but that of the truth; and this limit does not restrain its freedom, or interfere with it. It gives, on the contrary, to liberty a higher character, and makes it a certainty; for man received the gift of freewill that he might of himself bear

* Archbishop Whateley adopted the same line of argument when he wrote his famous treatise, "Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte."

[Translator's Note.]

witness to the truth. How then can it be supposed that faith makes an assault upon a privilege so sublime and so beautiful as the liberty of mankind? Faith is essentially free.

In every aspect it appears to us in its character of spontaneous freedom of choice. Faith is not a profession of belief extorted by violence. The scimitar of Mahomet may make a convert to the religion of Mahomet; but no scimitar ever made a convert to Christianity, neither can moral violence influence our belief. In fact, what does the priest say when a child is brought to be baptized: "Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?" And when, having come to years of discretion, the Christian is about to be admitted to the fuller privileges of his calling, again the question is: "Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made at your baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons," &c.

And when faith has once entered into the soul by man's free will, there is no earthly power that can keep it there against that will. My brethren, faith is the free surrender of the will; it is *liberty allied to truth!* How then can it be called slavery? Is a man a slave or a servant who says that two and two make four? Is a man a slave or a servant because he is enjoined not to do or to say anything contrary to honour and to honesty? Ah! believe me, my brethren, faith not only makes man's liberty certain, but it enlarges the boundary line of his horizon, and gives wings to his spirit to reach it.

In these days men will not believe, because freedom of thought is supposed to be a conquest of modern science. Who are the freethinkers of our days, the freethinkers of all ages and all conditions? The other day a child of nine years old was asked, "My child, of what religion are you?" The child, with an air of much solemnity, replied, "I am a freethinker." "I am a freethinker," said a woman who had given up the observances of religion. And very soon, my brethren, thanks to modern education, the freethinkers will be able to boast that they are to be found everywhere, in all the Churches.

But meanwhile let us consider if they are indeed what they profess to be. In order to be freethinkers, we must begin by being *thinkers* first of all. The frivolous child and the ridiculous woman are out of question—we put them aside. For what claim has such a woman to the title of a *thinker* at all? Has she ever occupied herself with the great metaphysical and theological questions which have absorbed the minds of those who really think? Plato and Aristotle, and the other great philosophers of the world—have they ever entered into her speculations? What *does* she think about? Her toilette, the fashions, this or that amusement, this or that entertainment; and, by dint of the study of a novel or a newspaper, she claims the right to be a freethinker.

But let us pass on to the other sex, who are more accustomed to think, in the real meaning of the word, and where shall we find those who really *think*? Is it the poor labourer, hard at work from morning till night to earn bread for himself and his children? He can read the newspapers certainly. You can judge for yourselves what claim the newspapers have to depth of thought, or to inspiring it in others. Or would you consider that young man to be a thinker who lounges away his time at one place of amusement or another? Or perhaps the politician, whose thoughts are entirely occupied with votes and elections, the rise or fall of the Ministry?

But where shall we find, my brethren, a man who really attains to the region of calm, contemplative thought? And given that there are some thinkers, are there any who are really freethinkers? Do not imagine it for a moment. "I am a freethinker!" exclaims a young man with pride; "for I take my opinion from no one but myself." From yourself. But do you know what you mean by yourself? Wait a bit, and I will tell you.

"Yourself," is the age in which you live, the family to which you belong, your father, the school in which you have been brought up, the society of which you are a member. This "yourself" is the newspaper which you read and buy for a penny

every day, which gives you your opinion cut and dried. And this opinion, which is born of servile imitation, of servility, pretends to call itself free. It is faith which breaks the fetters of conventional servitude, and opens a new and wider sphere to the mind of man.

Two young men were sent to complete their studies in a foreign city. One of them, attracted by the high-sounding title of free-thinker, denies the faith of his father that he may set himself free from all restraint, and enter upon a wider field to his faculties. One day he encountered the other, who had held fast by his faith, who addressed him thus : “ Now that you have become a free-thinker, what have you gained by it ? Tell me in what way does your understanding soar beyond mine ? Here is the world—nature, heaven, earth, the sea and the mountains—what is it that you see that I do not see also ? ”

Let us go a little further. Let us penetrate into the unseen world of thought ; let us meditate upon God ; let us speculate upon truth and beauty. Do you think that our great metaphysicians have not sounded the depths of these important truths just as much as you philosophers ? There were once two students who presented themselves before Lacordaire, so incomparable in his learning, so saintly in his life. And they said that they had found out that there was no God. They had proved it by incontrovertible arguments.

Lacordaire listened to them with patience, and then he said : “ Take this book ; that old recluse knew more against the existence of God than you do. ” The book was the “ Summa ” of St. Thomas Aquinas. The two young men opened the book, and read the first line—“ *Videtur quod Deus non sit* ” (“ It would seem as if there is no God ”). They looked up astonished. “ Go on, ” said Lacordaire, and they continued : “ *Sed contra est* ” (“ But against this objection here are the proofs ”). Overwhelmed with confusion, they returned home convinced. Now we will go further, we will soar higher. But my adversaries remain behind stationary ; their eyes cannot see any further, and I can. Why ? Because my faith opens a new world to me. They protest that

this new world is a hindrance to thought, an obstacle to the freedom of man's understanding.

Yes, faith is as much an obstacle to the flight of thought as the America which Columbus discovered is an obstacle in the way of the ships which cross the ocean ; as the planets discovered by Leverrière are obstacles in the path of the astronomer who makes his researches in ethereal space. Faith is an obstacle to the freedom of man's understanding, as the lighthouse on the shore of the ocean is an obstacle in the way of the ships tossing in the tempest ; as the iron rails of the railway are to the engine to prevent it from dashing over the embankment, and wrecking the train.

My brethren, you know what happened two years ago. A train left the station at Rome, and was just steaming into the station of Panicale when, by a fault of the pointsman, the engine left the rails. The engine was free: of what avail was its freedom ? It destroyed the carriages, and two unfortunate people lost their lives. This, my brethren, is what reason does, unchecked by the guiding light of faith ; it works its own ruin, and the ruin of man's social welfare.

My brethren, let us now pause to consider the answer which is on everyone's lips with regard to faith. Faith is provisional, it is said ; science is conclusive. Faith takes the place of science with children and the nation yet in its infancy ; but science takes the place of faith with the grown man and nation fully developed. My brethren, I am very curious to know when mankind ceased to be in its infancy, and became fully developed. You all know that it was the custom among the Romans to celebrate as a great family event the moment when the youth exchanged the dress of a boy (the *pretesta*) for the *toga* of a man. So, in the same way, the moment when mankind accomplished this metamorphosis should be also celebrated as an occasion for festive ceremonial. But, my brethren, I fear that this auspicious moment is supposed to be fixed by the freethinker !

It is too late now to attempt to draw the line between religion

and philosophy, because religion, and above all Christianity, abounds in instances of great men, who, according to the objection urged against faith, would belong to the infancy of the human race, as they lived and died professing an unquestioning, spontaneous faith, adorned with poetic symbolism such as would enchant the simple faculties of childhood.

These sublime examples of men who bore the respective names of Albertus Magnus, Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo—who were they? Had they no powers of reflection? Do such powers date only from the time of Voltaire and those who followed in his wake, who go on repeating his lucubrations in our schools, and instilling them into the minds of our young men with a solemnity which would be ludicrous if it were not pitiful? The natural instinct of children is to believe what they are told, and that proves that faith is, with us, a natural instinct.

I also know that this tendency is easily led astray. It must be regulated, and directed; but there is no reason on this account to conclude that faith is merely provisional, and must be either suppressed or yield its place to something else. My brethren, this inherent instinct that we have to believe—in itself felicitous, as it leads us to fly from error—is an evident proof that it is Divinely implanted in man; that it is not only a supreme benefaction to man, but also an imperative need of man's nature. That is why I willingly concede the point that children and nations in the infancy of their development have a natural instinct for the marvellous, and that such credulity can be imposed upon; because, what is the consequence of this reasoning? It follows that faith in the supernatural, even more than faith in the natural order of the universe, requires to be enlightened, guided, and directed by an authority superior to the uncertainties of reason.

Therefore, my brethren, if you were to collect together all the superstitions, all the credulities, all the false claims to the supernatural, which have been exposed by the light of true science, what will you find? Why, my brethren, you will find that the Christian religion, in this matter, has earned the

gratitude of the whole human race—of every nation under the sun—because the Christian religion has been the science which has enlightened mankind.

True faith has destroyed credulity in everything that falsely claimed to be supernatural; and has placed the true supernatural before us as a definite object of faith and worship, not only for every individual, but for all nations. I defy the freethinker to find a single defect in the faith of Christianity—a single alteration in the Creed since it was first professed nineteen centuries ago. Not one syllable is altered; in the midst of the mutability of all human affairs it remains intact, unchanged. But the conflict between science (in the modern acceptance of the word) and faith is renewed, and must be renewed, over and over again. From time to time some would-be scientist appears, and thinks he has found the clue to the secret; but proofs are wanting, and his discoveries fall to the ground.

I will make use of an illustration to explain my meaning. Not many years ago an American professor, William Graf, published a book which he pompously entitled, "The History of the Conflict between Science and Revelation." Caught by the title, the modern freethinkers thought the book would be the greatest success, and that there would be an end at last of the dogmas of the Christian religion. In point of fact, these were by way of being disposed of in the first few lines of the book, which declared that the doctrines of Divine Revelation were quite at variance with the progress and development of mankind; and went on to show that both Christianity and science had recognised the fact that neither were compatible with the other, and that true science concerned itself with human nature alone.

Well, my brethren, a very few years have elapsed, and this work of the learned American professor has been added to the number of similar works which are to be found in the necropolis of the freethinker, while the dogmas of the Christian religion are what they have been, are, and will be throughout all ages.

X.

OUR NATIVE LAND.

MY BRETHREN,—When I consider the life of man in all its aspects, I find that he has not only a private individual existence, which is spent in the peaceful retirement of his home, but that he has also a public existence, as a citizen and member of the State, investing him with certain privileges, involving certain duties to be performed. I see that he makes part, not only of that little world which we term home, but also of that larger and no less beautiful world which we call our country; and I know that, besides the name of father, son, or brother, he also bears the name of citizen.

My brethren, do not be surprised to hear the word *citizen* uttered from the pulpit. It is true that, like so many other words, this word has been profaned for purposes totally at variance with its original acceptance; that it has been twisted in a wrong sense, and has been given a wrong meaning; but when it is pronounced in the sacred precincts of God's House—before the Altar of Christ and the Cross of Christ—it becomes purified and restored to its original meaning, and that proud dignity claimed by St. Paul when, in the face of a Pagan tribunal, he stood upon his rights as a citizen of Rome.

On the other hand, what signifies either word or expression? It is the thing itself—the life and duties of a citizen—which forms one of the principal and most important objects which should occupy the mind of a Christian; because there revolves round this question the greater part of those false ideas which lead the people astray in the present century. No other question is so obscured from the light of reason by the dense and threatening cloud of error and prejudice as this one.

In the first place, the religious-minded Christian is assailed by accusations calculated to wound his pride as a citizen, and

then there is the permanent false assumption that a man's life as a citizen should be absolutely independent of his life as a Christian, and of his duty towards his God.

My brethren, have these accusations any foundation? Is there any ground for this erroneous assumption? We will see for ourselves; because I intend this morning to prove to you that the Christian faith, far from being at variance with the sentiment of patriotism, is, on the contrary, a guarantee for patriotism of the surest kind. In other words, the profession of Christianity, far from conflicting with a man's duties as a citizen, ensures, on the contrary, their fulfilment.

There is no necessity, it is indeed a useless waste of time, for me to assure you that I am not going to touch, even indirectly, upon politics. You all know me; you all know that I preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that I take especial care not to touch upon political matters, with which I have no concern. However, in case there should be anyone hereafter who might give any political colouring to my words, I take this opportunity of protesting loudly and openly that any such interpretation would be a wilful perversion of my words, and convey an impression of my meaning totally false.

My brethren, in the first place I would ask, Why is this defiance hurled against Christianity—against the Church of Christ upon earth? What is the meaning of this system of petty persecution to which our enemies are not ashamed to resort? The false religions are left undisturbed; no one thinks about them, no one pays any attention to them. Even Atheism, which has for its scope the subversion of society, does not rouse men from their apathy and indifference. No one makes any protest; no one thinks that the profession of Atheism gives any ground for alarm. It is only the Christian who is put outside the pale of the law; only the member of Christ's Church who is looked upon as a social outlaw.

Nor have we anything to hope for from the effects of time, because the system which begins by making him an outlaw, aims at nothing less than his banishment from every civilised

country on the face of the globe. In the world's estimation the Jew is preferred to the Christian, and even the Nihilist ranks above him ; but after all this system is not the system of yesterday, nor is there anything new in such treatment.

Pagan Rome adopted the method, and used the same language to the primitive Christians, and because they would not burn incense to the false gods, they were pointed at and marked out as bad citizens, although in every other point their lives were in strict accordance with the laws. Simply because they would not fall down and worship the false gods, they found themselves cast out of that corrupt society ; the reason being that in such a state of corruption it could not come in contact with the virtues of Christianity and maintain its existence.

It would seem, my brethren, that after nineteen centuries of Christianity we might fairly assume that no further proofs are required to establish its claim upon the world ; but since, in these unhappy times, with an obstinacy quite unparalleled, an attempt is made to revive the prejudices and ancient hostility to religion, it only remains for us to take up the weapons of the apologists of the primitive times—Justinian, Tertullian, and Origen—who proved to the Pagan Emperor that the precepts of the Gospel were best calculated to make a good citizen, and appealed to the evidence of facts, if throughout the imperial dominions any subjects could be found more amenable to the law than the Christians.

In short, what is the first duty of a citizen ? The first duty of a citizen is submission to the laws of the land—the laws which maintain the order and harmony of the State, the laws which guard the rights of the subject, which protect the country against any infringement of its greatness, its glory, and its liberty—anything, in fact, which might threaten the life of the State. Well, I would ask, how can it be supposed that the Christian religion could instigate any transgression of this duty ?

Does it not rather secure its performance, as it invests

authority with a sacred character, making it appear like a reflected light of the Heavenly authority? and because it ennoble the virtue of obedience, representing it, not as an act of servility, but as a voluntary homage paid to Him Who is the Source of all order and authority? Whoever despises and tramples under foot this, the first duty of every citizen, has no right to the name of a Christian; because he is acting contrary to the example and precepts of Jesus Christ, contrary to the teaching of the Apostles, contrary to all that has been ever enjoined, or will be ever enjoined, by the Church. Contrary to the example and precepts of Jesus Christ.

Look first of all at His example. From His cradle upwards His life is an example of submission to authority and law. His birth took place at Bethlehem, because of the imperial decree "that all the world should be taxed. . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; . . . to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child."*

His birth is registered by the civil authority: even He had His state as a citizen. He grew up in the continual observance of the laws of His country, setting a stirring example of loyal obedience. We know how, when the officers of the tribute money came to ask St. Peter, "Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes," † so well did He know his Master's careful observance of the law. And, in fact, Jesus Christ, Who might have claimed exemption on two grounds—the ground of His Divine origin, and the ground of His poverty—preferred instead to work a miracle, to enable Him to fulfil the obligation to the State.‡ This was His example. His precepts are equally clear as to the respect for authority.

Hear His words. One day there came unto Him those who wished to entangle Him in His talk—there were many such at Jerusalem—and they asked Him, "Is it lawful to pay tribute to

* St. Luke ii. 1-4.

† St. Matt. xvii. 24, 25.

‡ St. Matt. xxvii. 27.

Cæsar or no?" The question was a very delicate one, also perilous; because, if the Lord Jesus had pronounced in favour of the Roman authority, the Jews would have turned upon Him with indignation. If, on the other hand, He had declared in favour of His fellow-citizens, He would have set Himself in opposition to Rome. You see for yourselves the subtlety of the snare—how malignantly it was contrived. But while His enemies hoped by their cunning to have worked His ruin, He, the Teacher of all mankind, defined with a single word the line of demarcation between the two duties which press so hardly with their double claims upon each one of us. "Render," He said, "to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." * Thus He puts the rights of Cæsar in their proper and relative position to the rights of God.

Next I would have you to observe the teaching of the Apostles, which was always in perfect accordance with the example and precepts of their Master. Judge for yourselves. "There is no power but of God," says St. Paul. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." † He would have everyone have their due. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." ‡ A treatise on the duties of a citizen might be aptly framed upon the injunctions contained in St. Paul's Divine Epistles.

And St. Peter: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." § Can language be plainer or more distinct?

The Church, which has preserved the succession of the Apostles, has preserved their teaching also, and has never ceased

* St. Matt. xxii. 21.

† Romans xiii. 2.

‡ *Ibid* 7.

§ 1 St. Peter ii. 13-15.

to defend it against those who opposed it. We will take the example of Calvin. When he endeavoured to prove that the disciples of Jesus Christ were not compelled to observe the laws of their own country, all Christianity was up in arms to refute him. Listen to the words of the controversialists, especially those of Bellamine upon this subject : “ And it is only when the laws of the State are opposed to the Divine laws—it is only then—that we, in obedience to the former teaching of the Gospel, must not hesitate to confront our enemies, and call upon them to be our arbiters, as we say with the Apostles of old : ‘ We ought to obey God rather than man.’ ” When the authorities command me to act contrary to the law of God, I do not obey. Will the authorities say that I am, on that account, a bad citizen. No ; the authorities will, on the contrary, say I have done right. The second duty of a citizen is to love his country. Our country ! Is there a heart that does not throb at the word ? The sentiment can be traced back to the cradle of nations—everywhere throughout the world. That word, in all its majesty, with all its claim to veneration, has been able to call forth the keenest, truest sympathy of mankind. It has inspired the highest, holiest enthusiasm ; indeed, the love of our country is one of those immortal affections which, like those of family life, are innate : they can neither be taught, nor instilled into men. Our native country must ever command our love.

Well then, my brethren, I tell you the love of our country cannot be separated from the love of God. Listen to the daughter of Moab, who said to her husband’s mother : “ Whither thou goest, I will go ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” * Do you see in these words you have the simple but true expression of man’s natural feeling. And, in truth, religion is the principal element in the love we bear our country.

To belong to a nation means to share in that nation’s worship of God, for the worship of God is the greatest, the most

* Ruth i. 16.

important of all national interests. Look at the nations of ancient history—those which made themselves famous either by their organization or by the power they exercised over the world; look at Assyria, Rome, and Greece, and you will find that among those ancient nations there was something yet more highly esteemed than the love of their country, than the life-blood of that country, or their country's fame—the worship of their deities. They never went out to battle, they never promulgated laws, they never signed conventions with other States, without first of all consulting their gods.

What was the meaning of the motto of the ancients, *Pro aris et focus*? Simply this, that they did not fight only in self-defence, but in defence of their altar, of their temple; and that the heart which warmed to the fond affections of family life could be kindled by religious faith into a burning zeal. That was how their duties as citizens and patriots appeared to those heroes of undying fame. Because a nation cannot exist without God, society cannot exist without religion, nor any race of men that have ever walked this earth without some form of worship. Because, as God is the centre of life in every nation, so can there be no love of the native land without love to God; and I would have you to observe how great is the depth of patriotism in those who know how to unite and identify in their thoughts affections so holy, so sublime.

Ask the Maccabees. Rather than see the hand of sacrilege stretched out against the Altar, they exclaim, “Rather die with the arms in our hands than live as witnesses of our country's shame.” To private injury, loss, and ruin, they were ready to resign themselves; but when it became a question of an impure, unholy sacrifice, then their indignation rose, and they counted it a far happier thing to die on the field of battle than to survive such an infamy to their country.

The same idea prevailed among the Pagans. Thus Æneas, after having wandered far and wide, thought to have found in Lavinium the much desired city where he could establish the worship of his gods. Even Rome never destroyed the altars of

the conquered nations, in order that they might not be deprived of their country as well as of their liberty. And, as I have already bade you observe, the Christians were regarded as the enemies of the Empire, for the sole reason that they would not worship the Empire's gods. Everywhere religion and patriotism have been united in one common bond of affection. Try to separate them, and then tell me how to account for the reverence felt by the soldier for his flag—the centre, the rallying point of military enthusiasm. Is there no religious significance attached to the standards which have waved time after time upon the battle-field? What of the imperial eagles, the labarum of Constantine, the standards of our republics, the insignia of our cities? Is there one that has not some religious meaning attached to it, one that has not been consecrated by the blessing of God?

When the national flag has been secularised, when a nation of Materialists and Atheists has taken the place of a Christian people, it will be in vain then to look for the deeds of heroism, the sublime efforts of courage, the noble self-sacrifice, which, at the call of patriotism, have made in former times a nation's honour and fame. But, perhaps you will say, it is your faith which is contrary to patriotism. Faith contrary to patriotism. If by patriotism you mean the spirit of intrigue, ambition, and anarchy—if patriotism represents the passion for Utopia—then our faith *does* condemn it. But if by patriotism you mean a living, burning, active zeal, which invests a country with the ornaments of literature, science, art, and virtue; if by patriotism you mean the generous resolution to sacrifice your own possessions, your own life, all, to ameliorate institutions for the nation's welfare, to defend the nation's independence, or to protect the nation's frontiers from foreign invasion—where, I ask you, and when, has faith ever condemned such practices as these?

Did not our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself teach the people to love their country? Is there anyone who has shown more love for his country than Jesus Christ did when on earth? Did ever anyone shed tears of more sincere sorrow than He did over the

calamities which were coming upon His country? And notice this also; He, the teacher of all mankind, confined His personal preaching and teaching to His Own country, He came to save all mankind, but He reserves for His country the special tenderness of His heart, the living fire of His words.

My brethren, believe me that faith, while it purifies and ennobles patriotism, endows it with strength, efficacy, and power. We Christians, when we speak of love for our country, do not only mean the love of the soil, the love of the race to which we belong; our love embraces the Gospel tidings with their message of peace, which have been preached in our ears; the font where in infancy we have been baptized; the Altar, where we have been partakers of the Holy Communion. Our love lingers beside the cross which marks the grave of those we love in the peaceful churchyard, or, haply, the honoured resting-place of some saint of God upon earth. It stretches back into the past with many a fond memory; it reaches forward towards the future with many an eager hope. To us, all this is embodied in the word patriotism; this is what we would express when we speak of the love of our country, just as, through the length and breadth of the land, we recognise the Voice of God summoning people to their duties, and fixing the immortal destiny of each and all.

Consider once again the ancient nations of the world, and compare them with those regenerated by Christianity. They did not lack—those ancient nations—either the genius of knowledge, or the light of philosophy, nor yet brilliancy in feats of arms, or eloquence. It was not material civilisation that was wanting to them; but underneath the outside splendour there lurked squalor and misery. In those times conquest did not extend the dominion or influence of the country; but it extended the dominion of the conqueror and the power of his sword. Hence the wide-spread corruption which ensued. In the very heart of the victorious nation, egotism was ever at work raising barriers which narrowed the influence of the country; and the people in their poverty, the slaves in their serfdom, had no part

in a country which was practically represented by a caste of powerful oppressors.

When the barbarians rushed upon Europe with fire and sword, and overturned the civilisation of the ancient world, what was it, I ask you, which, upon the wreck of empires, rebuilt once more the edifice of nationality—which created the nations of Christendom, and endowed each with its own noble, honoured country? What was it, my brethren, but the Christian faith?

I do not for a moment say that in those times, even in an age directly influenced by the Christian faith, the nations were entirely free from crime; for that is a state of things which can never exist. But it was not the case then as it is now—one prevailing clamour on all sides for individual rights, or the rights of the people, and no idea but that of resistance to authority; but, on the contrary, whichever side you turned, you came upon some grand conception, some noble endeavour, a firmness of purpose, a definite aim, and undying perseverance. In short, some one of those characteristics which make the greatness of a nation.

Take, for example, Spain. Look at her, a prey to foreign invasion, and mark how from the fastnesses of the Austrian mountains, and under the banner of faith, she won back by degrees the lost territory of the mother country; while at the same time she sent out ships to bring a new world captive to her feet. It was the union of patriotism and faith which gave to Hungary and Poland strength to resist the inroads of the enemies of Christianity.

England, so emphatically a Christian country that she is called "the Island of the Saints," guided by faith, has been enabled to endow herself with a constitution which unites the liberties of the monarch and his people.

What shall I say of Italy—our own Italy? Is it not under the banner of faith that Italy has grown so great and powerful? Was it not there, in former times, that genius borrowed wings from faith for her lofty flights in science, literature and art, so as to enable her to bid the people listen first to the eloquent strains of Dante and Savonarola, and then turn

and contemplate such mighty works as those of Michael Angelo, and Raphael ?

Of France it has been said in former times that her greatness was the work of her Bishops and priests. Switzerland may be looked upon as the creation of faith ; for it is due to faith alone that she has become, if not the greatest and most illustrious, the most beloved of all nations. It is therefore false to say that faith is contrary to patriotism : faith—mark well what I say—faith upholds patriotism as a virtue. The love of our country implies also the love of our fellow-countrymen. Will you say that this is at variance with faith ? On the contrary, faith inspires and sustains this love.

In fact, my brethren, you know that it is not so very easy to love one another always ; you know that many times we have to put a force on ourselves to preserve this love one towards another—that it is only by force that we can reach the point of self-sacrifice which will make us forget the injuries we have received, and say to the person who has injured us, I forgive. A similar force is also required to overcome natural antipathy, and reach the point of heroism.

Where, then, are we to get the strength that is to overcome these obstacles, and win us the victory in the struggle ? Whence are we to derive this necessary courage ? From faith. Because faith puts before us, first and foremost, as the centre of our heart's affection, love to God ; and after that love to one another for the sake of the love of God. Faith directs our thoughts to Jesus Christ, dying upon the Cross for us, and says to us, in the words of St. John : “ We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” * Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Then, I would ask, where is the self-constraint, the self-sacrifice, the heroism of those who make a mock at our religion ? Sacrifice ! they will tell you that their life is one long series of sacrifices. But do not ask them to render an account of them ;

* 1 John iv. 14.

they withhold from God the sacrifice of their thoughts, and then give themselves over to the empire of their own passions. They scoff at those who devote their lives to God, and devote their own to the lowest form of idolatry. They make a mock at those who love God, and lavish their own affection on objects unworthy even to be named.

Do they put any force upon themselves to overcome natural antipathy? on the contrary they are slaves to a degree that is ridiculous to the last point. They cherish their antipathy to the Christian believer, not only from personal motives, but simply because he is not on their side, because he does not share their opinions; an antipathy which extends itself to the very dress. If they happen to set foot in a railway carriage or an omnibus where there is a priest, you will see them start back and take flight as if they feared coming into contact with a criminal; and then they pretend to speak of civilisation and liberty! True liberty is best shown by respect for others.

Then, with regard to the forgiveness of injuries. Read the newspapers, and you will be saddened by the daily narration of duels and ignoble quarrels. And what shall we say of heroism? The word should be transferred from heroism to egotism!—the egotism which reduces everything to calculation, and which leads men, when vanquished, to take up arms and fight on the side of the adversary, in the bitterness of their heart, and with an oath on their lips. To so low an ebb sinks the love of our fellow-countryman when not guided by faith.

To the love of our country there is another duty to be added—that of serving our country; because to serve those one loves is a natural instinct. Upon this point also I have no fear of being worsted in the argument, for my faith sustains me, and I would speak to you in the language of faith. Citizen, you have duties towards your country, just as you have duties towards your parents, towards your family; to fail in these duties would be to be guilty of parricide—it would be a dereliction of duty, of a sacred duty to which you are irrevocably pledged.

As a father of a family, you have duties towards your wife

and children from which no authority can release you. If you neglect these duties you commit an unpardonable crime in the sight of God and in the face of the world; and if the general opinion of the world did not condemn you, it would be our duty to do so as priests of God, just as we say to you, also in the name of the Christian faith, that it is your duty to devote yourself to promoting the welfare, the prosperity, the independence of your country. These are the dictates of faith upon the subject. "But, father;" some one may say, "no one can serve his country without courage; and the faith you preach, with its constant injunctions to goodness and kindness, weakens a man's spirit, and makes him a coward."

My brethren, the same accusation was brought against the Christian faith by the Gentiles of the old heathen world. When the Gentiles perceived that the banner of Christ was a Cross, they made a loud outcry as to the folly of supposing that soldiers would be found to fight under such a banner; but in the three succeeding centuries millions of martyrs enrolled themselves under that banner; and if such "folly" can make such martyrs, I do not know from what better source we can hope to derive a dauntless intrepidity of soul. You have but to consult history and you will find the facts for yourselves.

"But, father," I hear someone ask, "when the country is in peril, what can faith do for the defence of our country?" What can faith do for the defence of the country? Think of the victors of Lepanto, and the defenders of Famagosta, Candia, and Vienna; think of William Tell and his peasant compatriots. Those who ask such a question as this do not know history. If such are Italians, they do not know the history of their own country, or they would know that it was the Christian faith which prompted the brave Genoese in their defence of Candia against the Turks—that it was within the walls of Santa Croce that the Florentines gathered their courage to resist the demands of Charles VIII., and that the young girl, Rosa da Viterbo, who, like Joan of Arc, led the troops to victory, who fought for the liberties of Italy against Frederick II., was a Christian heroine.

Who does not recall with fond pride the glorious names of Andrea Doria, Piero Capponi, Fenuccio, Pietro Micca di Farinata? Who has not felt a thrill of enthusiasm run through his veins while looking at the flag, kept here in the Vatican, which Colonna tore from the grasp of the Mussulman? This, my brethren, is what the Christian faith can do in the defence of the country. Do you suppose that those heroes were any one of them lacking in the kindness and gentleness enjoined by Christianity?

Christian kindness does not weaken the character; on the contrary it strengthens and ennobles it, for the very reason, as Madame de Staël reminds us, that man is made in the image of God. It is materialism and unbelief that weaken a man's character, that make a coward of a man. These can never be the source of true patriotism; the man who has no belief must find self-sacrifice a task sorely against the grain; the man who has no hope beyond the grave has the strongest temptation to preserve for himself as long as he can the possessions of this life.

In fact, my brethren, can you produce any examples in the ranks of materialism or unbelief that you can set side by side with the heroes of Christianity? There are indeed examples of what such votaries can do, and the day is not far distant when their exploits will appear written on the impartial page of history. What will that record say? Listen, and I will tell you. There is a nation, whose heart has ever bounded to the call of patriotism, and one day this nation beheld a foreign invader passing her frontiers; standing before the very gates of her cities; pushing onward even to her capital. Her liberty trembled in the scale. There belonged to that nation a certain class of men called materialists—Atheists—and these, instead of rushing to the frontiers to withstand the invading force, turned back upon the churches for purposes of profanation. These were the men who, instead of fighting against the enemy, made war upon the peaceful citizen—men who spared to shed their blood in defence of their country, but shed instead, in idle wantonness, the blood of their fellow-countrymen.

Believe me, in proportion as faith dwindles, and ceases from the land, the people become cruel and bloodthirsty--indifferent to their country's welfare. While the Athenians were absorbed in their schools of philosophy, Alexander led them captive at his chariot-wheels. When Rome became careless as to the rites of the heathen deities, she was obliged to fall prostrate before Heliogabalus. When the Empire forgot its faith, it fell a prey to the Turk, who established his dominion in the Bosphorus. No sooner had France overturned the religion of the country than the Reign of Terror began. With such examples as these before him, the founder of the independence of the United States observed, with profound conviction: "If a nation would be free, that nation must be virtuous." And Benjamin Constant: "It is an undoubted fact in the history of nationalities that, as the epoch approaches when the people become indifferent to religious belief and religious observance, another epoch, that of the loss of national liberty, is also at hand.

On this account, my brethren, I implore you, with every power that I possess, to take heed to what I would say to you. You, who still hold by the Christian faith, make it known to others, teach it to the young, spread it abroad among the people throughout the length and breadth of the land. It is the sure way to the greatness and splendour of your nation; it is her best defence in the hour of danger.

Here I cannot refrain from an allusion to an event which, so long as this world stands, can never fail to stir the emotions of every generous heart. Need I say that I refer to our brave soldiers who laid down their lives for their country on the desert shores of Africa. They were heroes--ay, more than heroes--martyrs for the honour of their country; for when surrounded, and overpowered by numbers, they fought to the end, handing from one to the other the sacred banner of their country till all lay dead upon the field. Were these gallant young soldiers materialists? Were they Atheists? Go and ask their mothers who mourn their loss, the sisters who watch in vain for their return; ask it of their native country, their native

village, their native town, where their gallant death was commemorated with prayer and Psalm, and every solemn Christian rite. I tell you they were Christians, members of Christ's Holy Catholic Church; and betwixt the folds of their blood-stained banner learn to read the words, "For my country and my God."

My brethren, yet once more. I have yet another duty to impress upon you, and I dare to say it is the duty of the hour—of the actual moment. What is it? The duty to promote the harmony of our country. Yes, there lies the duty of the true citizen; because we must confess it with grief, but still confess it—we are unhappily divided among ourselves. Divided as to religion, divided as to politics, divided as to political economy, divided as to industrial progress, divided as to social interests, divided upon all those points upon which men should make a point of being at one, if the nation is to abound in wealth and prosperity.

Now, as our social welfare demands this harmony, this union, is it not evident that each one of us, however faint may be the spark of patriotism smouldering in the breast—is it not evident that we should place this duty of promoting the harmony of our country among those duties which have the most imperative claim upon our attention?

Is it not evident that to attain this harmony we should be ready cheerfully to sacrifice our strength, our influence, our intellect, the devotion of our lives? By such united effort we may succeed in getting rid of the divisions, the factions, by which our country is torn in pieces. By such united effort we may hope to bring back again the spirit of brotherly love among those who dwell in the same land, who bear the same name, who have one common interest at heart, who must share one common fate.

And this work is one which we, the priests of the Prince of Peace, never fail to put before our people. Oh! why, my brethren, should we remain divided, why persist in following diverging paths, why remain always opposed the one to the other? Why not unite in one bond the same natural tendencies,

so that we may present to the world the noble spectacle of a united country?—an Italy strong, and great, and free—worthy of her great past traditions, worthy of a noble future.

Then, my brethren, in the name of patriotism let us be more faithful to our duties as citizens; in the name of patriotism let us engage in the holy task of restoring harmony to the country. Let us never forget that a nation divided against itself cannot stand; neither let us forget that we cannot engage in this task without the help of religion—without the help of faith. Do you wish for a proof of this assertion? Here it is. In order to bring back harmony to the country, one thing only is necessary. What do you think that is? A diplomatic conference, perhaps, or a congress?—an able and efficient policy? No, my brethren, these are delusions which you must put aside.

The secret by which harmony can be restored to a country torn to pieces by division and party strife is this, and this alone. It bears a great name; it is the secret of *self-sacrifice*. Each must learn to sacrifice himself, to forget himself; to sacrifice, in short, his own opinions—*himself*—for the good of all, for the good of his country. Who will teach us the spirit of sacrifice? The politicians, perhaps? They contemplate sacrifice, certainly, but it is not the sacrifice of themselves. The rich and powerful? But they have no thought beyond their own interest. The men of science? But they have only one end in view: to force their opinions upon mankind, and to get them generally adopted.

Who then is to teach us the great lesson? It can only be taught by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. He only can pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, and it is only by means of charity that we can attain to the spirit of sacrifice. The worst enemies of our country—perhaps they should be more clearly defined as her most imprudent friends—are those who wish to rob the country of her faith; because when the country has been robbed of her faith, that loss involves the loss of charity also, which is the bond of union. Such would put in the place of charity, egotism and those covetous desires which promote and ever have promoted the ruin of the country.

What then, my brethren, remains to be done? When the liberty and the welfare of Christendom was threatened by the advance of Islamism, the cry for help, arose throughout the cities and countries of Europe to those who were in power and authority to arrest, in the name of God, the impending calamity. Well then, now I, in my turn perceiving the disasters which threaten the country, I appeal to you now, and I say, "Arise, make haste to meet and stem the advancing tide!" And what is the advancing tide? The tide of egotism and covetousness. Above all arrest the advance of error, which is the source of egotism and coveteousness.

Labour, then, with ceaseless endeavour to serve your country; arm yourself in her cause; put on charity, "which is the bond of perfectness"; and fight the battle of truth in that hope "which maketh not ashamed." So shall you be your country's true deliverers, and in the hour of peril her salvation.



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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SELECTIONS FROM THE SERMONS
OF
PADRE AGOSTINO DA MONTEFELTRO

Preached in the Cathedral at Florence,

Lent, 1887.

GR^{EAT} was the sensation produced at Florence last Lent by a course of Sermons preached in the Duomo by a Franciscan whose impassioned eloquence has won for him the title of the Modern Savonarola.—*Church Quarterly Review*.

THE Sermons of Padre Agostino da Montefeltro, called by his countrymen "the Modern Savonarola," can hardly fail to have a deep interest for anyone who cares to study the thoughts and influences of our time. Not that the comparison with Savonarola seems the happiest possible. It is, no doubt, a natural one to be made by the Florentines, when they see their cathedral crowded daily by seven or eight thousand people, chiefly poor, struggling to push themselves nearer to the pulpit, so as to lose nothing of the preacher's words, murmuring "Eccolo! Eccolo!" when he comes in, listening in breathless silence from the beginning to the end of the sermon, when "a low murmur of 'Bené, bené,' would swell up like the sound of the sea from the vast multitude. . . . By his eloquence and his personal goodness, Padre Agostino attracted these great crowds to the Duomo at Florence; and they came to listen, with the enthusiasm already described, to sermons on the deepest yet simplest truths of religion, and the practical results of some of these truths."—*Spectator*.

FOUR hours before the Father ascended the pulpit, all the chairs and all the benches were occupied. The precincts of the vast church seemed transformed into a sea of human heads. The Divine Word coming from the mouth of the humble Brother electrified the congregation. Several times the sacred associations of the place were powerless to keep back the applause which broke out with irresistible force. The University of Pisa closed two hours before the sermon began, and professors and students ran with one accord to hear the illustrious Franciscan. On coming out of the church the thousands of persons greeted him with their cheers and huzzahs. They wished to carry him in triumph through the streets.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

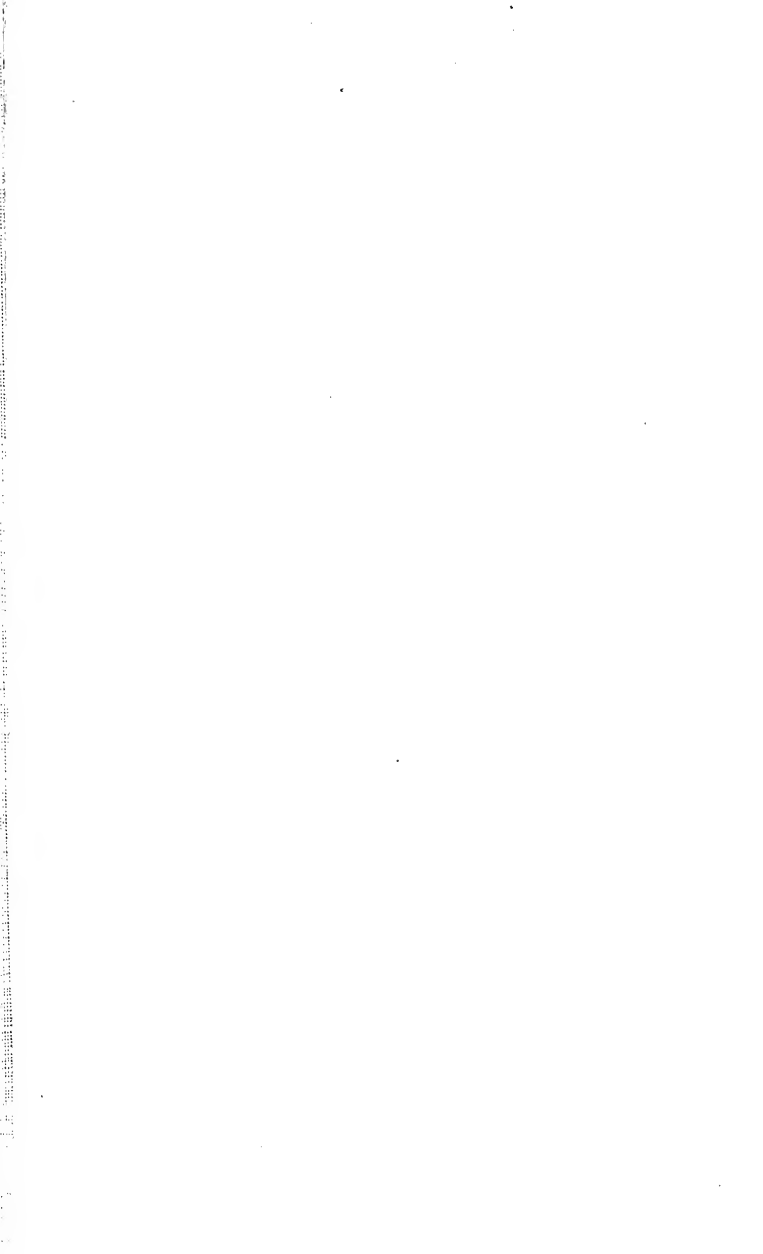
THE vast concourse, the thrilling interest, the hushed silence, the rapt attention, the spontaneous enthusiasm of the citizens thronging in their thousands the sacred fane, and listening to the burning words poured forth in "utterance as rapid and pellucid as the torrent of a mountain stream," by the fervid eloquence of the man of God, recalls to mind reminiscences of scenes described by the graphic pen of George Eliot in "Romola" or by Mrs. Oliphant in her "Makers of Florence."—*Church Review*.

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