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MEMORIAL VOLUME



S E R M O N S

BY THE LATE

ROBERT S. CANDLISH, D.D.

MINISTER OF FREE ST. GEORGE'S, AND PRINCIPAL OF THE
NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE

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P R E F A C E.

ROBERT SMITH CANDLISH was born at Edinburgh on the 23d of March 1806, being the youngest child of James Candlish, a teacher of medicine there. His mother was Jane Smith, one of the six "Mauchline belles" celebrated by Robert Burns, who said of her, "Miss Smith she has wit." His father, whose surname was originally M'Candlish, but who dropped the Celtic prefix when at Glasgow College, was also a friend of the poet. He died very suddenly, a few weeks after his son Robert was born, April 29, 1806; and thereupon his widow with her family, consisting of two sons and two daughters, removed to Glasgow, where they continued to reside for many years. There, accordingly, Robert Candlish spent his early days. He was at first a somewhat delicate and rather timid boy, but soon getting over this, he joined with hearty enjoyment in the games and amusements of his companions. He entered Glasgow College, 10th October 1818, at the early age of twelve; and attended the gown or undergraduate classes for five sessions, during which he gained many prizes, and in due time took the degree of M.A. At this time Dr. Chalmers was minister of St. John's church and parish, and had as his assistant Edward Irving, whose great gifts as a preacher were

not then generally appreciated. The church was crowded when Dr. Chalmers preached, but comparatively empty when his assistant was to occupy the pulpit. Robert Candlish, however, with a few friends and fellow-students, while fully appreciating the eloquence of Dr. Chalmers, enjoyed almost as much the services of his then unpopular assistant, and was one of his regular hearers. In 1823 he entered the Divinity Hall of the Church of Scotland, which he attended during three regular sessions, completing the course required by the Church by one partial session, and finally leaving college in December 1826. The Professor of Divinity in those days was Dr. Stevenson MacGill, a man of earnest piety and decidedly evangelical opinions, who contributed much, by his quiet influence, to the spread of sound doctrine and the advance of spiritual life among the ministers of the Scottish Church.

During a great part of his college course Robert Candlish was largely employed in private teaching, sometimes as much as eight or ten hours a day, in addition to his studies. In 1826 he went with Sir Hugh Hume-Campbell, as private tutor, to Eton College, where he remained till 1829, thus getting an opportunity of seeing something of English school and church life. Meanwhile, when at home during one of his vacations, he was licensed as a preacher of the gospel by the Presbytery of Glasgow, August 6, 1828 ; and on returning to reside in Glasgow in 1829 he was engaged as assistant by Dr. Gavin Gibb, the minister of St. Andrew's, in that city. Though not yet ordained as a minister, he had the entire

charge of the congregation, as well as the whole supply of the pulpit ; and he preached regularly twice every Sabbath, only occasionally exchanging services with other ministers. In this capacity, while almost entirely unknown, he prepared and delivered, in the ordinary course of his duty, some of those sermons that afterwards made a profound impression in St. George's, Edinburgh, and established his fame as a preacher. He enjoyed at this time the companionship and friendship of the Rev. David Welsh, then minister of St. David's, who early appreciated his gifts, and frequently invited him to preach to his own congregation. This friendship continued warm and unbroken till the too early death of Dr. Welsh in 1845. With Dr. Smyth of St. George's, Dr. Henderson of St. Enoch's, and Dr. Robert Buchanan of the Tron Church, he also formed early and life-long friendships. During these years, domestic sorrow had visited the home of the young preacher. One of his sisters had died in 1827, and his only brother, James Smith Candlish, a young man of great gifts, and much beloved by his relatives and friends, was cut off, just as he was entering a most promising career in the medical profession, and had been appointed Professor of Surgery in the Andersonian University. He died of fever, September 15, 1829.

On the death of Dr. Gibb in June 1831, Mr. Candlish's engagement in St. Andrew's came to an end, and thereafter he became assistant to Mr. Gregor, the minister of the country parish of Bonhill, in the vale of Leven, Dumbartonshire. Here, too, the whole of the

pulpit and pastoral duties were entrusted to him, and he discharged them with such zeal and diligence as to endear himself to the hearts of the people. In this position he remained for two years and three months. But though he had been thus long engaged in full ministerial work ; he was still but little known beyond a small circle as an able and evangelical preacher, and seemed as far as ever from obtaining, what was then the utmost aim of his ambition, some small country charge as ordained minister. So little prospect did there seem of this, that he seriously contemplated going out to the colonies, and actually offered himself for work in Canada.

But the great Head of the Church had another position preparing for him. The congregation of St. George's, Edinburgh, had been raised to the highest position in that city by the zeal and eloquence of Dr. Andrew Thomson, who was suddenly cut off in 1831. It was soon after deprived of the services of his saintly successor Mr. Martin, by the state of his health, which required a residence in Italy. His place was supplied by assistants ; and in January 1834, Mr. Candlish succeeded his friend Mr. Roxburgh (now Dr. Roxburgh, of Free St. John's, Glasgow) in this capacity. When Mr. Martin's ill health was found to continue, and it became necessary to have an ordained assistant and successor, the young preacher from the West had so proved his gifts, and gained the hearts of the flock, that he was chosen to this office ; but Mr. Martin having died in Italy in the following May, Robert

Smith Candlish was ordained to the entire charge of the congregation on the 14th of August.

In the summer of 1833 he had preached on four Sabbaths in the National Scotch Church, Regent Square, London, then vacant by the removal of Edward Irving ; and had made so favourable an impression that the session and congregation desired earnestly to have him as their minister. They were, however, not in a position to give him any invitation to London till the spring of the next year, by which time steps had begun to be taken towards his settlement in St. George's. Though he accepted this as the prior call ; the circumstance now mentioned led to a warm and lasting friendship between Dr. Candlish and some of the elders of Regent Square Church ; and was the first, though not the last, link that connected him with that congregation.

The new ministry in St. George's was thoroughly efficient. Not only was the power of the pulpit fully maintained, but pastoral visitation and works of Christian beneficence were zealously and diligently conducted ; and the members of the congregation set to working for the cause of Christ. One result of these labours was the formation of the congregation of St. Luke's, out of a section of St. George's parish, the first of a series of efforts in Home Mission and Church extension that the congregation successfully made.

But the even tenor of this course of Christian usefulness was somewhat broken, though never interrupted, by the troubles of the Church of Scotland, which called the minister of St. George's to take an active part in the

conflict she was then waging for her rights and liberties. He was a member of General Assembly in 1839, when the House of Lords had just given the final decision on the first Auchterarder case, denying the legality of the Veto Act of 1834, by which the Church had sought to secure the freedom of her people in the purely spiritual matter of the calling and ordination of ministers over them. The Moderate party proposed that that Act should, without being repealed by the Church, be thenceforth disregarded, since it had been declared illegal by the supreme civil tribunals of the country. In the debate on this point, Mr. Candlish made his first Assembly speech. It was in support of the view that, as the Veto Law was not of a civil nature, it could not be given up by the Church in deference to the Civil Courts, without surrendering her spiritual independence as a Church of Christ; and it was more especially called forth by a motion made by Dr. Muir, attempting a sort of middle course or compromise between the two opposing principles. "The objections to the scheme were stated," says Dr. Buchanan, "and urged with singular felicity and force, by one who was destined from that day forward to exert perhaps a greater influence than any other single individual in the Church, upon the conduct and issue of this eventful controversy. The reputation of Mr. Candlish as a preacher was already well known. His extraordinary talents in debate and his rare capacity for business, not hitherto having had any adequate occasion to call them forth, were as yet undiscovered by the public, probably undiscovered even by himself.

They seemed, however, to have needed no process of training to bring them to maturity. The very first effort found him abreast of the most practised and powerful orators, and as much at home in the management of affairs as those who had made this the study of their life. There was a glorious battle to fight, and a great work to do on the arena of the Church of Scotland ; and in him, as well as in others evidently raised up for the emergency, the Lord had his fitting instruments prepared." *

Mr. Candlish's powers in debate and in the conduct of business led to his having some of the most important public duties in the Church entrusted to him, as new and greater complications arose ; especially from the course pursued by the Presbytery of Strathbogie, in the Marnoch case. The majority of that Church Court resolved, in disobedience to the express injunctions of their ecclesiastical superiors, and in deference to the Civil Court, to ordain to the charge of the parish of Marnoch a man, against whom the whole congregation solemnly protested ; and it became necessary to suspend them from their office, not as a punishment, but simply to prevent their committing this gross outrage in the name of the Church. A special meeting of the Commission of Assembly was held in December 1839, at which Mr. Candlish moved, and carried by a majority of 121 to 14, the suspension of seven ministers of the Presbytery of Strathbogie.

Immediately thereupon he had to go down to that

* Ten Years' Conflict, vol. i. pp. 460-1.—Ed. 1854.

district, along with Mr. Cunningham and others, to intimate in the parishes of the several suspended ministers the sentence that had just been pronounced. But before this could be done, these ministers had obtained an interdict from the Court of Session against the sentence being intimated in their parish churches, churchyards, or schools. This interdict, though it was held to be unjust and oppressive, was without hesitation obeyed ; because it related only to the use of premises which were the property of the State, and so within the jurisdiction of the Civil Court. Accordingly, it was in the open air that Mr. Candlish preached at Huntly, and other ministers in the other parishes, intimating the suspension of the ministers, and supplying ordinances to their people.

Soon afterwards, however, the Court of Session, on the application of these ministers, granted an extended interdict, forbidding any ministers of the Established Church to preach anywhere within these parishes without the authority of the legal incumbents. As this interdict interfered directly with the purely spiritual function of preaching the gospel, it was deliberately disregarded ; and the most grave and godly ministers of the Church willingly went, at her appointment, to dispense the means of grace among the people whose ministers had been suspended. Mr. Candlish was not sent on this duty till the spring of 1841, when he again preached in Huntly, this time in a new place of worship that had been built by voluntary contributions.

This act, though it was in no way different from what the evangelical ministers of the Church of Scot-

land had been systematically doing for a year past, was made the occasion of depriving him of an appointment for which he was highly qualified. By the recommendation of a Royal Commission, the Government had resolved to institute a Chair of Biblical Criticism in the University of Edinburgh; and Mr. Candlish was nominated as its first occupant. The appointment was all but completed, when Lord Aberdeen made a violent attack upon him in the House of Lords, alleging that he had violated the law by preaching at Huntly about a fortnight before; and, in consequence of this, Lord Normanby, the Home Secretary, cancelled the appointment. In his published letter to Lord Normanby on this subject, which at the time made a deep impression, Mr. Candlish vindicated himself from the charge of breaking the law, and pointed out the deep-rooted convictions and high principles that were involved in the unhappy conflict between the Church and the Civil Courts.

In the Assembly that followed, he melted and almost carried away the whole house by his persuasive and pathetic appeal to the Moderate party to acquiesce in the passing of the Duke of Argyll's Bill, which would have put an end to the conflict. This and other attempts at an adjustment proved vain; and matters went on into further complications; till at length, the House of Lords, having finally decided the claim of the Church to spiritual freedom to be illegal, and the Ministry and Parliament having declined to give any relief, the ministers who supported that claim, 474 in number, among whom was Dr. Candlish, separated from the State, and resigned

their livings in connection with the Scottish Establishment in May 1843.

In the various discussions and negotiations that preceded this event, as well as in the labours needed for building up the Church in her disestablished state, Dr. Candlish (who had received the degree of D.D. from Princeton College, New Jersey, in 1841) took an active and leading part. He made numerous journeys, both in Scotland and England, advocating the principles of the Free Church, and extending her organisation. He took charge, at different times, of various of the schemes of the Church, more especially of that for Education, having been convener of that committee from 1846 to 1863. Yet, in the midst of all this public activity, he kept up his pulpit and pastoral work, and attached more and more closely to him the large and intelligent congregation of St. George's.

During the Assembly of 1847, the sudden and lamented death of Dr. Chalmers created a vacancy in one of the chairs of Theology in the New College; and in August of that year Dr. Candlish was appointed Professor by the Commission of Assembly. As he had ever a strong conviction of the superior importance of the training of the Church's future ministers, compared with the pastorate of any one congregation; he accepted the appointment, and preached a farewell sermon to the people of St. George's. But on this occasion, as on the former one, he was providentially hindered from exchanging the work of the pastorate for that of the college. The congregation of St. George's,

with one heart and voice, had chosen as his successor the gifted and pious Alexander Stewart of Cromarty ; but before he could be inducted into the charge, his sensitive nature had given way under the strain and burden of the prospect, and he died November 5, 1847. This sudden stroke made a deep impression on the congregation and on Dr. Candlish, who, feeling that his heart was too much with his afflicted people to give himself wholly to the work of his chair, requested, and was allowed by the College Committee, to continue the charge of St. George's during the winter, meeting the students only once a week for the study of Butler's Analogy. At next Assembly, having been led to think that his call to the professorial office was not so strong as he had supposed, he formally resigned the chair, and was restored to the ministry of St. George's.

He continued to lead his people in active Christian work ; and besides the home mission work that was constantly carried on in the original parish of St. George's, the territorial missionary congregations of Fountain-bridge (out of which grew the Barclay and Viewforth churches) and Roseburn, were originated, and fostered into strength and vigour, under his care. His labours in the general administration of the Church's business it is not possible even to enumerate here, much less to describe. He always took a peculiar and warm interest in the more directly spiritual part of the Church's work, such as the promotion of vital religion, evangelistic labours in our own country, and missions to the Jews and heathen abroad.

Nor was he inactive in the field of literature, edifying the Church of Christ by his popular and practical works, and, when necessary, defending in controversy her fundamental doctrines. In 1842 he published the first volume of his "Contributions towards the exposition of the Book of Genesis," afterwards completed in three volumes. In 1845 an incidental newspaper correspondence called forth from him a small volume "On the Atonement," which was recast and enlarged in 1861. In 1854, being invited to lecture to the London Young Men's Christian Association in Exeter Hall, he took the occasion to review the teaching of the Rev. F. D. Maurice, in his "Theological Essays," then just published; and he issued along with his lecture a detailed "Examination" of that work.

But the accumulated toils of what was virtually three lives in one—that of a city minister, of a church leader, and of a theological writer—told upon his constitution; and, in the spring of 1860, Dr. Candlish had a severe illness, by which he was laid aside for several months. In the following year, he consented to the proposal of his congregation to have the help of a colleague; and the Rev. J. O. Dykes was inducted in that capacity, December 19, 1861, and continued to fill the office till 1865, when he resigned his charge on account of ill health.

In 1861 Dr. Candlish occupied the chair of the General Assembly; and in the following year he was appointed Principal of the New College, Edinburgh, in the room of Dr. Cunningham, who died December 14,

1861. As head of the College he opened and closed each session with an address to the students ; and heard and criticised the popular sermons which they are required to deliver. When the Cunningham Lectureship was founded, Principal Candlish was appointed the first lecturer, and delivered his course on the "Fatherhood of God" in February and March 1864. The views therein expressed he had long held and indicated in many of his sermons, such as those printed in the Appendix to the Lectures, and in his subsequent volume "On the Sonship and Brotherhood of Believers." But they appeared new, and even dangerous, to certain zealous defenders of orthodoxy ; and gave rise to a somewhat keen controversy. Dr. Candlish's Lectures on the First Epistle of John, which were written and preached before the delivery of the Cunningham Lectures, though not published till 1866, form, as it were, a Biblical illustration and practical application of them.

Meanwhile his health was becoming ever more broken and uncertain ; his attacks of illness were more frequent and severe ; though his zeal and devotedness to the cause of Christ and his Church never flagged. He was more especially active and earnest in the negotiations for union among the unestablished Presbyterian churches in Scotland, which were carried on from 1863 to 1873 ; though unhappily without attaining the great object aimed at. In 1871-2 he was laid aside from all work, for eleven months, by a severe and exhausting illness ; but, in the winter of 1872-3, he was permitted again to occupy his pulpit, and preached to his beloved

people on most of the Sabbaths of that season. The burden, however, of the congregational work had been necessarily devolved on the Rev. A. Whyte, who, since his induction as colleague in October 1870, had in every way consulted for his comfort and relief, and in whom he placed the utmost confidence.

In the weeks preceding the Assembly his strength was much reduced, and the effort that he then made to take part in its proceedings was a great strain upon him. He preached only twice after it—for the last time on the 15th of June. The three following months he spent at Whitby, returning to Edinburgh in the end of September.

The decline of his strength now became more rapid ; and from the 10th of October his medical advisers began to fear that he would not rally. When they told him their opinion, he fully realised and calmly faced the prospect before him ; and it made no change whatever upon him. He gave his last directions with his wonted exactness, and with perfect composure ; he was cheerful and happy, and took an interest in passing events to the last ; he was affectionately mindful of all his friends, present and absent, and bade a loving farewell to those of them whom he was able to see. He delighted to hear his favourite texts and hymns, those most full of Christ ; and without either great exaltation or depression, but “knowing whom he had believed,” he calmly waited for the end, and peacefully fell asleep just before midnight on Sabbath, October 19th.

It has been thought well to furnish, in this brief

form, the outstanding facts of Dr. Candlish's life. Such a biography as many friends have expressed their wish to have must necessarily be a work of time and much care. Meanwhile it is hoped that the present collection of sermons, with this brief biographical sketch, will form an acceptable memorial volume. The occasion on which the first sermon was preached led to its being placed as introductory to the others, which, as taken from various periods of his ministry, from its beginning in St. Andrew's, Glasgow, to its close, will witness to his fidelity to the resolution to know nothing among his people but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I.

SOWERS AND REAPERS.*

“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.”

JOHN IV. 37.

WHEN our Lord, in answer to the invitation of his disciples, “Master, eat,” says with seeming abruptness, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of” (vers. 31, 32), he does not mean coldly and rudely to reject their proffered kindness, but rather he would turn that kindness to higher and holier account than they themselves intended. It was not that their care for his bodily necessities was to him impertinent or offensive, but that he would engage and interest their care in what was to him far more urgent than any supply of his temporal necessities,—his finishing the work on which his heart was set, and doing the will of him that sent him (ver. 34). The solicitude which they showed for his personal comfort could not but be grateful as a mark of personal attachment; for we know how readily he was touched by even the slightest service sincerely rendered: how he took in good part the very least of the common offices of civility and friendship. He who gratefully accepted the woman’s testimony of regard as being all that she could offer (Mark xiv. 8), surely did not intend to meet and mock by a cold and churlish refusal the affectionate importunity of his followers;

* Preached in St. George’s Church, Edinburgh, in the afternoon of 17th August 1834, the first Sabbath after ordination and induction as minister of that church and parish. The Rev. Dr. Smyth, of St. George’s, Glasgow, preached in the forenoon of that Sabbath.

who, in their consideration for his comfort, knowing how urgently he needed refreshment, prayed him to eat. But, as when Martha was careful and troubled about much service for his personal accommodation, he thought it necessary to intimate how much he preferred, above her well-meant officiousness of hospitable attention to her guest, her sister's devout and dutiful earnestness as she sat at the feet of her teacher and her Saviour: so here, without undervaluing the sympathy of his disciples as it extended to the necessities of his earthly condition, he would claim and challenge that very sympathy for the nobler aim of his heavenly calling, on which his own desires were more intensely fixed; not that he would have had them to give less heed to his wants as man, but more to his work and warfare as Son of God.

For this was their main defect during their attendance upon Christ, and before the Spirit showed them the things of Christ. Much as they were attached to his person, they felt comparatively but little interest in the design of his ministry. Witnessing, in the intimacy of daily and familiar converse, all his meek and holy graces, experiencing all his tender love, they loved their master in return with deepest gratitude and warmest friendship. But they understood little of his character as the Anointed of the Lord,—the Saviour of his people from their sins. They regarded him with strong affection on account of his human excellences, with dark and doubtful faith in his divine power and prerogative of salvation. We see this spirit in the desponding, yet still faithful, affection of the apostle Thomas, when, hearing his Master's determination to go up to Jerusalem, there inevitably to fall a victim to his enemies, he said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." He had little faith, but strong love; he had no hope beyond his master's death, yet he was willing to die along with him. The same spirit

imparts a touching and tender interest to the demeanour of the disciples after the death of Jesus. They had seen him perish on the cross. They concluded that all was over. Their vague expectations of his triumph were disappointed; their pleasing dream of hope was past. Yet still there lingered in their breasts a fond regard for one who had been so dear a friend. They could not bear to think of him as an impostor. They delighted to speak of all his works. And there is much of mournful kindness of feeling in their pathetic expression of regret, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21).

Something then of this spirit, even now not uncommon, of earthly attachment to the person of God's minister, combined with much ignorance and disregard of his ministry,—something of this our Lord saw on the present occasion, in the affectionate solicitude of his disciples about his bodily comfort, as contrasted with their indifference about the work in which they found him engaged, the work of preaching the gospel of salvation, fulfilling all righteousness, and laying the foundation of his spiritual kingdom. This work is more important in his esteem than necessary food; "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (ver. 34). And in this work he would have his followers to be as deeply interested as himself. He would have them to show their love to his person by their sympathy in his work. He calls them, and he calls us, to work along with him; to work in the great spiritual harvest of grace then and now going on, preparatory to the coming harvest of judgment; to labour in gathering in the ripe crop of God's elect church, a people prepared and made willing in the day of his power. He tells them, and he tells us, of the good even now to be done, and of the urgent necessity of doing it,—of the many souls ready to be added to the church if we will but put forth our hand in faith and prayer to bring them

in. Do not say that months must elapse before the harvest. "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest" (ver. 35). Then by way of encouragement he tells them of a rich reward and sure success in their labour: "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal" (ver. 36). And he tells them also of the manner of the work,—its distribution among a succession of labourers, each preparing for his follower, and each reaping the fruit of his predecessor's toil,—"Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth."

Now it is this principle of distribution and succession among the labourers in the gospel harvest that I propose to consider. And as all, both ministers and people, profess in their several spheres, if they believe the gospel at all, to be labourers in this work, the subject concerns us all. May the Lord carry it home to the consciences and hearts of all. Let us then,

I. Attend to the reasonableness of the arrangement according to which, in the labour of the gospel harvest, the winning of souls to Christ, one soweth and another reapeth. And then,

II. Let us consider the practical import of the maxim.

I. The reasonableness, the fitness, the propriety of the arrangement, may appear from two considerations;—*first*, its correspondence with the constitution of human nature and human life; and *secondly*, its harmony with the plan of divine providence in the dispensation of grace.

(I.) It accords with the constitution of human nature and human life that one should sow and another reap. This, as our Lord uses it, is a proverbial saying, a general maxim, founded on universal observation, and universally applicable in human affairs. The very distinction, the special characteristic of man as an intelligent and social being, lies in the truth of this saying; for it is by reason of his intellectual and

social capacities that the saying, as regards all human operations, is and must be true. It could not, with anything like the same propriety, be affirmed of the brutes that perish that among them one soweth and another reapeth. They, guided by unerring instinct, are perfect in their work at once, and each individual is competent to complete its own work. And, destitute of the faculties of reason and of speech, they cannot improve upon one another's designs and doings; they cannot take up and carry on one another's labours; each must begin anew for itself, and stop just where its predecessor stopped. Hence the uniform and exquisite perfection of their workmanship on the very first attempt; hence its no greater perfection at the very last. Men, however, by the use of understanding and of language, can improve themselves, and communicate their improvements to one another. And hence the transmission of stores of knowledge, and facilities of applying it, through successive individuals and generations; the common stock receiving fresh accessions and accumulations as it passes from mind to mind, from hand to hand. Each takes up his predecessor's half-done work, and uses it as the material of his own. At each successive stage some addition is made to the amount collected before. One begins what another is to carry on and complete. "One soweth and another reapeth."

It is this which renders the education of the individual man possible; this capacity of reaping what is sown by others, easily receiving impressions from without, and turning them to account, so as to make them fruitful of new principles. The active mind, energetically following out the various impulses and influences to which it is exposed, enlarges its resources and advances in knowledge and in power. The seed sown by intellectual and moral culture to-day is reaped in a large increase of intellectual and moral energy to-morrow. And, considering how many persons and circumstances have part

in this process of training, each in turn more or less concerned in carrying the process forward ; through how many hands, whether rude or skilful, the pliant and plastic soul passes in its progress through this scene of its development ; and how these all, as they successively take it up, do something towards promoting or modifying its growth ; we may well say in regard to the whole of this marvellously complicated agency, connecting the first bias given, through a long series of mutually dependent influences, with the final and permanent character impressed ;—“ One soweth, and another reapeth ;” one begins what another is to carry on and complete ; one labours, and another enters into his labour.

And the same law holds in the progress of society. In virtue of our capacities of reason and speech, by which we think and receive the thoughts of others, one soweth, and another reapeth. And so, in the race as well as in the individual, advance or improvement goes on. This susceptibility of advance, we repeat, is the very thing which distinguishes from the instinct of the inferior animals the reason of man. Instinct is perfect at once ; and therefore not progressive. Reason is far from perfect in the beginning ; but then it is progressive. Under the impulse of blind instinct, what is done is done unerringly by all individuals and all races, and done alike by all ; and there all are stationary. Under the guidance of reason, individuals and races of men learn by experience, and so may be always advancing. The ants who prepare their meat in summer, the conies who make their houses in the rocks, the locusts who have no king, yet go forth by bands, the spider who taketh hold with her hands,—these all are exceeding wise (Prov. xxx. 24-28). Their several processes are executed in more consummate wisdom than any of the works of man. But the wisdom is not their own. It guides them surely, yet blindly ; so that, as they never fall short of the specifically appointed work, so neither do they go beyond it. The indi-

vidual does not improve upon his first attempt, and the present race is none the better for all the exceeding wisdom of its predecessor. But man, as a rational and social being, is capable of advance to which scarcely any limits can be assigned. Coarse and clumsy as his early essays may be, successive efforts give increased facilities. And so, from generation to generation, the process of improvement goes always on.

It is thus that all the noble triumphs of science and art which have most signalised our race have been achieved ; by the operation of this law of our rational and social nature, one soweth, and another reapeth. Rarely is any great work begun, continued, and ended by the wisdom of the same mind, by the might of the same hand. There have been changes or relays of workmen, each contributing to bring it to perfection. The element of power, discovered by one, has been unfolded by another, applied by a third, and improved by a fourth. The vast and comprehensive grasp of a commanding intellect seizes and embraces a principle ; sound practical sagacity takes and betters the hint ; an adventurous spirit makes the experiment ; successive observations suggest improvements ; new difficulties are overcome as they occur ; new expedients are resorted to ; till, at last, through many different processes, the invention arrives at a maturity, and is applied to a thousand uses and purposes, of which the original author of the whole never dreamed. But he sowed, and others reaped. His attainments became the property of others, and a stock on hand for them to trade with. And so the intellectual and moral wealth of society is always growing. What indeed in this day is our boasted civilization but the reaping of what others have sown ? We stand indebted for all its blessings to the men of former generations. For us they laboured rather than for themselves ; and we are entered into their labours. We are availing ourselves of stores which they collected ; using instruments which they devised ; taking

up and carrying on, in hundreds of ways unknown to them, the works which they began. Could these mighty intellects, these master minds, on the intense lustre of whose glory we fix our eyes amazed, see us now, gathering so familiarly and so wondrously the fruits of their high thought and toil, they would be scarcely less amazed themselves. A school-boy idly lounges over the mysteries of Newton's study ; a child commands the giant power which Watt trembled to evoke : and unthinkingly, and almost unconsciously, we turn to account the resources they have left as a precious legacy to mankind, for transacting our homeliest household avocations, as well as for wielding our empire over all the elements.

And other blessings there are, more precious far than the results of science and art, which flow to us according to this arrangement ; the blessings of our free constitution, our civil rights, our religious privileges. Herein emphatically is the saying true ; "One soweth, and another reapeth : other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." The patriots of other days who sprang up in quick succession, each in his turn catching the mantle as it fell, and grasping the torch from the hand of his precursor in the glorious race, animated by the same spirit, pressing on to the same goal,—these all toiled and suffered and died, not for themselves alone, but for us. By many sacrifices and at much hazard these have laid the foundation of that peace and those godly institutions which we by inheritance enjoy. And shall we lightly cast away the hallowed fruits of their undaunted zeal ? Shall we tamely renounce the struggle which they maintained ?—refuse to enter into the labours which they have handed down to us ?—to carry on their work ?—to carry out their principles ? and so transmit to our children those privileges of our birthright which our fathers have transmitted to us ? Such then being the universal law of human nature and human life, it is quite according to

analogy that it should hold good in reference to religion, and the progress of the kingdom of God in the soul and in the world;—that there too the labour should be distributed through a succession of labourers; all working into one another's hands and passing on the task or pleasure of alternate sowing and reaping, of sowing and reaping by turns, from mind to mind, from generation to generation; until all is finished; the last seed-time over; the harvest all gathered in; and the time fully come for him that soweth and him that reapeth to rejoice together.

(II.) But this law is especially to be regarded as being in admirable keeping and consistency with the plan of divine providence as we have the key to it in the dispensation of grace. As a law of nature, it is generally applicable to all sorts of schemes conducted among men. As a law of providence, it is more especially applicable to the scheme of saving mercy revealed in the gospel.

I. The very adjustment, so to speak, of that scheme in the counsels of the Infinite Mind involves the law. The allotment of the several departments of this mighty and mysterious work of redemption among the several persons of the Godhead,—is it not on this very principle, that one soweth, and another reapeth? and is it not intended to turn the principle to account for the more illustrious exhibition of the divine glory in the salvation of a guilty world? Why this threefold agency? this successive transmission of the momentous business to be transacted, from the Father to the Son, and then from the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit? The Father commissioning the Son; the Father and the Son commissioning again the Spirit; and all for the appointing, and accomplishing, and applying or carrying forward, of one and the self-same work, the salvation of the lost? Why so cumbrous and costly and complicated an arrangement? Why so marvellous a distribution of the parts or offices to be

sustained in this economy, in order to the gracious interposition of the ever-blessed Trinity on man's behalf? Why might not a simple act of divine power, a simple exercise of divine prerogative, at once repair the evil done by the Fall, reverse the sentence incurred, and so accomplish on the instant the end aimed at? Why so tedious and complicated a process as that of which Scripture unfolds to us the gradual fulfilment? Why so solemn a consulting and covenanting of the Godhead, so express a combination of the love of the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit, all tending, and tending through a series and succession of operations, to one grand result; which, as it might seem, might have been more easily and promptly achieved? Why, but that through such an arrangement, the wisdom and power and holiness and love of God might be made more manifest; so that the work might be more gloriously and effectually secured?

We see the Father offended, yet still willing, waiting, to be gracious; firm to maintain, in the character of Judge, the high authority of his insulted government, of his violated law, yet full of tender compassion to transgressors; inflexible in his determination to vindicate holiness and visit sin, yet still loving sinners, reluctant to inflict upon them even righteously deserved woe, seeking their return and reconciliation to himself. And for the consistent and harmonious adjustment of these two ends, for exercising the mercy in which he delights without compromising justice, or relaxing that judgment which, though his strange, is yet his indispensable work; we see him deputing and delegating the task, which it was impossible for man or angel successfully to execute, to the Son of his love, the Eternal Word; committing, as by solemn treaty, to him the charge of vindicating the honour of the law by his obedience unto death, and assigning as the reward

of his humiliation, the purchase of his pain and the travail of his soul, an elect and redeemed seed.

And now the Son takes up the arduous labour, and proceeds to execute the gracious plan. No other sacrifice or offering would suffice ; then said he, “ Lo, I come ; in the volume of the book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will, O God.” And in the fulness of time he came. He who was in the form of God came in the likeness of men. And becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, enduring its dark agony and all its curse, the hiding of his Father’s countenance, the doom our sin deserved, he could say of the work given him to do, and the bitter cup given him to drink, as he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, “ It is finished ! ” So his part is done.

Another part is yet to do. Another agent comes, to execute another office ; the Spirit of truth, whom the Son, when he ascended up on high, sends to carry forward his own work, to take of what is his and show it to the souls of men. The proper office of the Son is discharged when by his propitiatory death he has satisfied divine justice, and opened the way for the consistent exercise of divine mercy and the return of sinners to God. And now the office of the Spirit, the sanctifier and the comforter, begins ; that office being to make sinners willing to return, to humble the pride of natural self-righteousness, to soften the hard heart, to charm away the enmity of the carnal mind, and bring the victim of devils, meek as a child, clothed and in his right mind, to the feet of Jesus ;—the self-convicted rebel to the footstool of the Sovereign ;—the relenting prodigal to the home and bosom of the Father !

Thus the great object is fully accomplished, God, as a just God and a Saviour, is glorified. The enemy of God is reconciled. Sin is condemned while the sinner is converted and saved. “ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and

knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !” And how important, in particular, does this principle of the distribution of office or labour appear, when we see it illustrating the wisdom and power of God in the glorious economy of salvation ? For when, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came to do his part of the wondrous work, when, in three thousand converted souls the fruit of the Father’s holy electing love and of the Son’s righteous redeeming grace began to be visibly gathered in, oh ! how emphatically might it then be said ; “ Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.”

2. As the work is distributed in the counsels of heaven, so is it also in the agency on earth ; for the same end, the more glorious and complete illustration of the divine sovereignty and love. For, condescending to employ agents upon earth, God employs them so as to demonstrate the necessity of his own agency, over and above them all. And for this end, he so arranges the labours of his servants, that, while all execute their several parts, to himself alone shall belong the glory of uniting and combining these parts into one entire plan. So it is in human affairs, that the comprehensive eye of him who surveys and superintends the manufacture, looks to the one result of the several processes in which his busy operatives are successively in their several departments engaged ; and takes in as a whole the work, in the distinct and separate details of which they are exclusively occupied. In the trimming of a vessel, a ship for sea, how hard are all hands at work, each in his own department, and each apparently unmindful of his neighbour. All seems utter disorder and inextricable confusion. Ropes are pulled seemingly at random. Sails are promiscuously set and shifted. There is a running to and fro upon the decks, and a constant ascending and descending by the masts. All things are unsettled and out of joint. Many different opera-

tions are going on simultaneously, and as it would seem independently. A stranger is fairly bewildered, and can scarce believe but that he has got involved in the rout and riot of a mutiny. But an experienced eye sees order and unity in the apparent chaos. He sees the labours of one subordinated to the labours of another, and all working, without much thought of it themselves, for one end. He knows how to appreciate the intellect which can guide so simply and effectually the various movements of so noisy and tumultuous a crew. And he is prepared for the graceful courtesy with which, all being adjusted, the stately vessel is to sweep on in her majestic course.

Even so, in some such way, to the "principalities and powers in heavenly places may be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). We may fancy there would be more glory, were God, by some one signal and decisive victory, to achieve the triumph of his cause. We see not the necessity or the advantage of so many independent and detached labourers. And yet, rightly considered, it is the very unconscious union and mutual subordination of these labourers, in order to one great end, that most strikingly declares the wise superintendence of one who causes them all to work together for the purpose of establishing his kingdom on the earth. One, by God's appointment, soweth; another, by God's blessing, reapeth. Many have been the servants of God, at sundry times and in divers manners, all occupied in forwarding his work; and yet the labour of not one of these is in itself complete; it needs to be united to that of the rest; others must enter into the labour to render it at all effectual. Who then of them all can say that by his might, or by his wisdom, success is ultimately attained? And yet each is important in his place; not one of them can be dispensed with. Prophets, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, all in their several spheres are required, by their

prayers and labours and sufferings and blood, to eke out one another's imperfections, and carry on one another's plans ; the Lord overruling all, and by means of all advancing the interests of his church.

How grand, how glorious will this arrangement appear when the secret history of the church is unfolded ; and it is seen how in reference to all its great events, obscure and unthought-of saints perhaps have contributed each his *quota*, one sowing and another reaping, and all content that God should receive the praise ! Nay, how striking, in this view, in the day when the secrets of all hearts are revealed, may the history of a single sinner converted, a single soul saved, appear ! We ascribe it now perhaps to the agency of some one individual whose word of affectionate warning was blessed for the working of a salutary change. He indeed may have reaped ; but how many may have been concerned in sowing the seed and contributing to advance the harvest in that soul ? Who shall say how many counsels of parental love have been addressed to him, long forgotten, but then seasonably recalled ? how many tears have been shed over him ? how many prayers have been offered for him ? prayers then heard and answered in the day of the Lord's power ! Who shall tell how many plans have been laid, how many expedients have been adopted, for arresting, awakening, quickening him ? how many acts of kindness have been done to him to melt his heart ? Who shall calculate what the value and efficacy of these several means may have been as instruments in the Spirit's hands, preparatory to conversion and conducive to its permanence ? Many may have watched over that one soul ; taken an interest in its welfare ; longed and prayed and laboured on its behalf. And what reason can be assigned why at the last, the critical stage, a slighter touch, it may be, a meaner agency, may have proved decisively effectual where other influences

and appliances had seemed to fail? Oh! surely, when Paul plants and Apollos waters, and neither Paul nor Apollos but another gathers in the ripe grain, it can no longer be questioned that it is indeed God who gives the increase; so that one sowing, another watering, and a third reaping, God alone giving the increase, he alone is to be glorified!

Such then is the reasonableness of the arrangement, or the law and principle, in terms of which one soweth, and another reapeth; such its suitableness to the constitution of human nature and the divine economy of grace.

II. In regard to the practical import of the saying, one soweth, and another reapeth, it reminds us of the condition of the work in which we are called to engage, and of the place which properly belongs to us as subordinate agents, carrying on and advancing through successive stages what is not our work but the work of God. It is therefore, on the one hand, an argument of humility, calling us to remember how small, how very small, a portion of what is to be done is under our charge, and how merely subsidiary our charge of that small part, with all its responsibilities, is and must be. And it is, on the other hand, an argument of love, of brotherly love, inasmuch as it reminds us of our dependence on our fellow-workers, and their dependence upon us, we entering into their labours, and they into ours, and so establishes a bond of union most practical and trustworthy. But more particularly, the maxim considers us, *first*, as sowing what others are to reap; and *secondly*, as reaping what others have sown. These two heads of application are all-important.

1. We are sowing what others are to reap. And here, let it be remembered that the proverb holds true universally; the law is general, applicable to all sorts of work. Whatever it may be that we sow, there is great likelihood of others reaping. And let us be very sure that every one of us is

sowing seed of some kind or other. What are you sowing? Are you sowing to the flesh? And have you no fear that God's word may be fulfilled as to you, and that you may of the flesh reap corruption? (Gal. vi. 8). Or if, by his gracious interposition, you are saved, have you no fear that from your sowing, corruption may be reaped by others? Alas! how easily in this way may you become partakers of other men's sins! how often, in mere thoughtlessness, may you open a chink and crevice in the flood-gate of corruption, small indeed, but yet sufficient to let out a stream that will soon be large enough! Vice and folly need but a beginning, and if you set Satan's machinery agoing in a frolic, there are plenty of his servants ready to keep it going in right earnest. Alas! how many idle and hasty words are every day uttered, how many wayward passions indulged, how many worldly practices tolerated, how many little liberties taken and trifling inconsistencies allowed, all without considering the dangerous precedent others may draw from them and the evil use they may make of them. You intend no harm. You do no great hurt yourselves. But if you give the hint which others are prompt enough to take; if you point the way where they are ready enough to run; if they improve upon your suggestion and better your example; as full many there are on the watch and alert to do; if you sow, however sparingly, what they reap more liberally; oh! in such a case, what reason can you show why you should not share their responsibility, why you should not be involved in their blame?

Beware then what you sow. Look well to it that it be all good, and of a good tendency. And if so, take courage from this assurance, that its influence will spread and diffuse itself, and what you sow another will be ready to reap. This might seem poor encouragement if the work were your own. In that case it would be felt to be a hardship that you should sow, and another reap, that you should labour, and another

enter into your labour. And accordingly, in reference to a man's labour for his own accommodation, this is often in Scripture denounced as a heavy judgment. But the work in which you are engaged, the gospel work and labour of love, is not your own, but another's, even God's. And instead of being offended because it may be often taken out of your hands to be carried on and completed by others, you rejoice in the sure prospect which this very arrangement affords of its being in the end successful. For the proverb is a promise, and is to be pleaded as such. The law here stated is the law of God's procedure which he is pledged to fulfil. The work is his own; therefore he will raise up workmen. The seed is his own, therefore he will raise up reapers. He will not suffer it to rot and perish.

Be this your encouragement, ye Christian parents, who have sown good seed in the hearts of your children, and laboured to begin a good work there. Are you tempted to repine because it is not your privilege yourselves also to reap the fruit, and see the work prospering in your hands? Yet be strong in faith and patience. The work, if it be the work of the Lord,—and who shall doubt that it is?—will prosper, if not in your hands, in the hands of some other servant of the Lord. And is not that assurance enough for you? Be you faithful in doing your part; and be very sure that God will raise up others of congenial mind to enter into your labours and do their parts. And God himself, in his own good time, will do his own part; for he does not always see it to be meet to put all the responsibility and all the honour upon one agent. One soweth, and another reapeth. You have laboured; others may enter into your labour, and carry on your work. And in some aftertime, in a time of the outpouring of the Spirit, a time of refreshing and of revival, your labour, now as you are apt to fear in vain, may begin to appear. The lessons you have taught may be tenderly remem-

bered ; your warnings, your entreaties, your earnest supplications, may all be gratefully acknowledged.

Oh ! what consolation may this view impart to the saint and servant of God called away in the early stage of his labour, with but little of a visible result to cheer and comfort him ? He has but sown some seed ; he has but entered on his field and superficially surveyed its extent ; he has but put in order his machinery. Many a favourite scheme he is compelled to leave unmaturing,—many a fair blossom, still how tender and precarious ! “ Oh ! ” he may be tempted to wish, or we on his behalf, “ oh ! that I might be permitted to abide by my post a little longer ; to remain another year ; to complete some experiment I have just begun ; to await the issue of some effort I have been hopefully making ! ” Yes ! but if God has work for thee elsewhere, or blessed rest, why shouldst thou desire to continue here ? Is thy presence necessary for the work on which thy heart is set here ? Nay, out of the very stones God can raise up servants to prosecute his work. He can cause the good seed to grow, the good work to prosper, without thy agency. His having thus far employed thee is matter of pure kindness and great condescension ; and why shouldst thou grudge that others should be employed too ? If there is any joy in the success of the labour, why not allow others to partake of it ? Fear not that thou mayest thyself be defrauded. “ He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; ”—not, however, to the exclusion of him that soweth, but that both may rejoice together ; he that soweth and he that reapeth equally and alike.

2. The maxim is addressed to us as reaping what others have sowed ; and in that view, it is an argument for instant and cheerful diligence. You are not doomed always to labour for others ; others have laboured for you. You take up the work which they have begun, and gather the

fruits of their toil. Let none, then, say in indolence, It is time enough yet ; there are yet four months till the harvest ; lift up your eyes and see fields ripe already to harvest ! The servants of God are never sent to fields quite unsown ; there has always been some forerunner preparing the way ; there is a people made ready. So it was in the case of these Samaritans of whom our Lord spoke. Unpromising as their situation was ; ignorant, superstitious, and idolatrous as the Jews deemed them ;—there were still some remnants of good doctrine preserved among them in the books of Moses, which disposed many to welcome the Messiah of whom Moses bore testimony. So it has always been. The prophets entered into the labour of the patriarchs ; John the Baptist into the labour of the prophets ; Jesus himself into the labour of John ; the apostles and succeeding teachers into the labour of Jesus. In the very worst circumstances still there are fields holding out the prospect of a ready harvest. Even in the depths of heathen ignorance and darkness, God has never left himself without a witness ; the primitive, traditional revelation is not quite obliterated ; there is still some gleam of light that may fit the eye for bearing more, some element of good that may be seized and turned to account. The veriest wretch that lives, ignorant, degraded, hardened, of callous heart and conscience seared, sunk in profligacy and crime, has still, in some nook or cranny of his soul a chord that you may skilfully touch ; a recollection of tenderness that you may awaken ; some long dormant sympathy that you may arouse ; some thought of better and happier days that may yet be made to sting him to the quick ; some sacred impressions wellnigh effaced, that may yet be deepened and renewed.

For us indeed, in these lands and in these days—may we not be called to lift up our eyes and see fields white already to harvest ? The good and holy men who have gone before

us in the church,—have they not prepared a rich harvest for us? Then let us put in the sickle. Let us take up the work where they left it. Let us enter into their labour and fulfil their joy! True, many seeds of corruption, many elements of evil have been sown through neglect or sin in former generations; and in the church's weakened energy and crippled resources we are now reaping their sad fruits. Yes; but the venerable Christian patriarchs of our land are not so long gone; the godly of kindred spirit have not so utterly failed; but that still the church may find many precious seeds of their sowing to mature, many fruits of their prayers to reap and gather. Then manfully let us enter into their labour, catch the spirit of their devoted zeal, and forward the interests of the cause so endeared to the best affections of their hearts, so indebted to the faithful labour of their hands.

To this we are called by the reverence and respect we have for them. Do we not see them, as it were, bending upon us the eye of intense expectancy,—waiting till we take up the weapons which they have dropped, and resume the fight which they sustained to the last? Do we not hear their voice of imploring earnestness,—“Let not all our tears and prayers be lost, and all our efforts frustrated! Let not the trumpet with which we proclaimed the jubilee of a world's salvation, now from feeble or unfaithful lips give forth an uncertain sound! Let not sinners whom we warned return again to folly for want of seasonable reproof; or the penitent whom we comforted be again discouraged for want of a preached Saviour; or the hungry soul be stinted of the rich supply which we were wont to give out of the fulness that is in Christ!”

Again we are called by the sure prospect of success. We in this generation receive as our portion the wisdom and the energy of the men of other days. We have their experience to teach us; their plans to guide us; the still remaining results of their Christian faithfulness as materials to work

with. We start as from an advanced post. We begin with no despicable stock of Christian resources on hand, bequeathed to us by them. They have done much to facilitate what we have yet to do ; removed many obstacles ; and gained a footing on which we may securely stand in our attempts to move the people. Let us press eagerly on in the way they have left comparatively clear for us.

Lastly, we are called by the hope of rejoicing along with them in the results of our joint labour ; one sowing, and another reaping ; 'and both rejoicing together ! What a spirit-stirring thought is this ! What an animating prospect ! To share in the holy joy of saintly men ! their joy in those successful undertakings which they began, and it is our privilege to complete ! To be partners of their labour now ; to be partners of their triumph hereafter ! To meet them in the realms above, and take sweet counsel with them on what we have together done for the glory of God and the good of souls ! To compare notes of our several services in the same vineyard of our common Lord ! What heart can conceive, what tongue express, the untiring rapture of such sympathy and fellowship with the noble spirits we have long revered and loved ? What a theme of never-ending delight, what a topic of unceasing interest, to have in common ! And oh ! will not eternity be all too short to trace the history of our joint labour ; to adore in instances ever fresh in the recital the love and wisdom of him in whose cause we have jointly laboured ; to point out cases where the seed they thought lost has by God's blessing in our hands become fruitful,—souls to whom they spoke in vain many a word in season brought at last, by our means, to remember and to bless these very words ! And in turn to find how, in the conversion of many a sinner, and the edifying of many a saint, we have been more highly honoured than we could ever have dreamt of ; having been joined and asso-

ciated in the work with some venerable father or dear brother in the Lord, into whose labours we entered, and whose joy in these labours we fulfil and share.

These, my friends, are thoughts on the present occasion, not unsuitable as addressed to you who are to be hearers, and very overpowering as they affect him who speaks to you! Called by a short and sudden and most unforeseen course of advancement to enter into the labours of the great and good men who in this highly-favoured corner of God's vineyard have laboured so nobly and so faithfully,—who would not be filled with emotions of awe, and well-nigh of terror? Masters in Israel both of them! The one, of commanding powers all consecrated by noble zeal in the cause of God and truth; the other, of most saintly, spiritual, and deep experimental Christianity! Who but must feel as if he were touching the ark with unhallowed hand in entering, with the consciousness of much infirmity and many deficiencies, on a field which even such men found too arduous! Much as there may be, perhaps, in such a call to rouse and excite an enthusiastic mind; alas! there is far more to discourage and depress! And much of your kindly indulgence, and much of your sympathy and friendly aid, and full many,—oh! let there be many,—of your prayers, earnest and affectionate, will he need who now desires to preach to you, not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and himself your servant for Jesus' sake! For his own part, he can but plead an honest and hearty desire to enter, with God's help and your countenance, into the labours of those who have gone before; to fulfil their plans and purposes of usefulness to the Church, and carry on every good work by them auspiciously begun. For this desire alone he asks you to give him credit; and the expression of it he prays you to take in good part. And here your co-operation may fitly be expected. To occupy the place of such men, whose personal acquaintance

it was not his privilege to enjoy ;—ignorant therefore in great measure of their designs and thoughts ; must be felt as a serious disadvantage ;—for the diminishing of which, every suggestion that can enable him to enter more fully into their labours, and especially into the spirit of their labours, cannot but be very grateful and very welcome.

But these, after all, are secondary considerations. The work of the ministry is in itself a work of awful responsibility ; and none of us is sufficient for it. Therefore, brethren, do ye pray for us, that our sufficiency may be of God ! Pray that the Spirit of the Lord may be with us in all our private preparations,—in all our official duties ! Pray that we may be enabled to be faithful ; to remember the commission with which we are charged ; to shun all compromise ; to declare the whole counsel of God ; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all meekness and authority ; to comfort the mourner and speak a word in season to him that is weary. Pray that our own heart may be richly stored with all divine wisdom and an experimental knowledge of the divine love. So shall we be the better able to bring forth out of the treasury within the word of life ; speaking from the heart to the heart. Pray, above all, that the word which we preach to others may be preached with divine power to ourselves ; that our professional familiarity with the gospel may not hinder its personal application ; that, much as we have to speak of the things which belong to our peace, we may feel them much more ! Pray for us, brethren, oh ! pray for us, that our own work may not condemn us ; that, after having preached to others, we may not ourselves be cast away. Amen.

II.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

“The man Christ Jesus.”—1 TIMOTHY II. 5.

THERE must be some reason for the emphatic use here of the word “man,” or the expression “the man.” It does not indeed give any countenance to the opinion that Jesus Christ the Mediator is a mere man. On the contrary, it suggests a presumption, at least, if not a proof, against that opinion. The very isolation of our Lord as “the man;” the stress laid in so studied and marked a way on his manhood; is fitted to convey the impression of his being something else and something more than man. And the real explanation of the importance which Paul manifestly attaches to his humanity, in connection with the subject about which he is writing, unequivocally shuts out the use which some champions of the doctrine of his mere humanity have been accustomed to make of this their favourite and often vaunted text.

The explanation is to be sought and found in the context. The apostle is enforcing the duty of intercessory prayer. Especially he urges the obligation lying on believers to make their intercessory prayers all-embracing, all-comprehensive (ver. 1). You are to pray for others. You are to pray for all men, without distinction, without respect of persons (ver. 2). You are to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority. These are singled out and specified for a very obvious cause. They may be, they often are, as at the time then present they were, the enemies of Christ; blasphemers of his name;

persecutors of his church. On that, or on other grounds, they may seem to be beyond the reach and range of that sympathy which ought to prompt and inspire intercessory prayer, and without which such prayer can scarcely have any sincerity, any earnestness, any warmth of heart.

To meet this narrow feeling of nature, Paul brings forward the large and wide sweep of grace. To pray for all, even for those that are most hostile or most alien (ver. 3), is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. It may well be so, it must be so. For it is in accordance with his mind and will as Saviour. He is our Saviour, it is true; but not ours only (ver 4). He will have all men,—his greatest enemies, the most outcast prodigals, not excepted,—he will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. If there are any for whom we cannot pray directly out of sympathy with them, we can pray for them out of sympathy with the Lord, who is our Saviour, and who is willing also to be theirs. We may have no particular or personal interest in them. But we know the interest which the Lord our Saviour feels in them. And if we love him as the Lord our Saviour, and enter into his heart, and comply with his desire, we will pray for them, for all of them, with an intensity proportioned to the measure of our filial likeness in him to our Father in heaven.

All the rather will we pray for them all, when we bear in mind that they and we are all one. Yes! all are one, they and we are one; inasmuch (ver. 5) as there is one God for all, one Mediator for all, one Saviour for all. There are not many Gods, so that one might belong to one God and some to another. There are not many Mediators, many Captains of salvation, under whose separate banners men might rank themselves at pleasure. There are not many ransoms, with blood of various hues to meet varieties of taste among the sprinkled worshippers. There is but one God, to

whom all belong. There is but one Mediator, one only name under heaven given among men whereby all must be saved. There is but one Ransom, one Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

One God for all. One Mediator for all. One ransom for all. And the ransom, the Mediator, Christ Jesus, is "THE MAN." Not a man of a particular colour, whether fair, or dark, or of Ethiopian dye. Not a man of a particular race, Jew or Gentile ; of Shem, of Japhet, or of Ham. Not a man of a particular class or rank, whether of royal ancestry or of lineage proper to his birth in the stable of an inn. Not a man of a particular temperament, whether sanguine or morose, grave or gay. Not a man of a particular history, walking in a path apart. He is "the man Christ Jesus ;" everywhere, always, to every one, the same ; the man. Therefore they who love him, the man Christ Jesus, may well be exhorted to pray for all men.

"THE MAN CHRIST JESUS." The very absence of all qualifying epithets makes the designation unique and solemn. There is a majesty about it which inspires awe. There is a grace in it which wins trust and love. It is not the holy man, the righteous man, the gracious man. It is not the man approved of God, who went about doing good. It is not even the man of sorrows. It is simply "the man Christ Jesus." How much there is in this bare and bald title, may the Spirit show us !

I. He is the man all through ; out and out the man. In soul, body, spirit ; in look, voice, carriage, walk ; in mind, heart, feeling, affection ; he is out and out, through and through, the man. In him ;—in all about him, all he is, and all he does, you see the man ; not the man of honour, the man of piety, the man of patience, the man of patriotism, the man of philanthropy ; but the man. The manhood in

Christ Jesus is very noble ; but it is very simple. And it is because it is so simple that it is so noble. None who knew him while he lived here, let them have known him ever so well, would have been inclined, even if they had been able, to delineate or draw his character when he was gone. The better they knew him, the less would they have been inclined to try. None have ever succeeded in drawing his character since. For he is the man Christ Jesus. Do you ever think of him but just as the man? Other men you think of as distinguished by their features. Did you ever see a portrait of him that pleased you? No! And you never will. For he is the man Christ Jesus. You remember other men by their peculiarities of manner. But by what peculiarity do you remember the man Christ Jesus? You associate other men in groups, around their favourite centres of attraction, their idols of the cave, the tribe, the market-place. In which of all the groups do you place the man Christ Jesus?

Oh! it is a blessed thing to know that Jesus Christ is the man. The man for you, brother, whoever you are;—and the man also, I thank God, for me! The man for the strong,—the man for the weak! The man for kings; for what king was ever so kingly as the man Christ Jesus? The man for heroes; for who so heroic as the man Christ Jesus? The man for you who toil in the carpenter's shop; in the like of which once he toiled, like you,—the man Christ Jesus! The man for you who lie groaning beside that fresh grave; for what heart so tender as the heart of him who wept at Bethany,—the man Christ Jesus! The man for you whose sin is ever before you; for whom did sin ever grieve or vex as in the agony of his bloody sweat it wounded, in the garden, the man Christ Jesus!

II. He is simply man throughout; in every exigency,

in every trial, simply man—the man Christ Jesus! In all his earthly and human experience, you never find him other than man; you never find him less than man; and you never find him more than man. That he is more than man, you believe and are sure; for you see his divine works of charity and power. You see how he saves others. But from the manner in which he fulfils his own obligations, meets his own temptations, and bears his own sufferings, you would never gather this. Himself he does not save! Other men, in the stern battle of life, often fall far below your standard or ideal of genuine manhood; while occasionally they tower to such a height of transcendental and romantic virtue that you feel as if they belonged to a higher sphere, a utopian world. They are none of us, you say, no kith or kin of ours. Do you ever feel anything like that when you read the story of your Lord? No. For he is the man Christ Jesus!

He is the Son of God, you know; the Father's fellow. But you never think of his being the Son of God as making his manhood at all different from yours. No! For you never find him taking shelter from the ills to which flesh is heir in any power, or privilege, or prerogative of his divine nature and heavenly rank. Nor do you ever find him interposing it as a shield against the world's cold cruelty and the fiery darts of the wicked one. No! In his war with the great enemy, as well as in the whole experience of his life and death, he is the man Christ Jesus. And as to all that, he is nothing more. He will not feed himself by miracle; for he is the man Christ Jesus; and lives, as other men live, by the providence of God, by bread, or whatever else God may appoint. He will not call down fire to avenge him on his enemies; for he is the man Christ Jesus; and commits, as every man should commit, himself and his cause to God. He will not summon from heaven legions of angels for his relief; for he is the man Christ Jesus; and as the man Christ Jesus he

says—what every man among you may receive grace to say along with him,—“The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?” “Father, not my will, but thine be done!”

Thus, as the man Christ Jesus, he lies in his mother’s bosom, and works at her husband’s trade. As the man Christ Jesus, he is subject, all his youth, to his parents. As the man Christ Jesus, he is weary, hungry, thirsty. As the man Christ Jesus, he is vexed, grieved, pained, provoked. As the man Christ Jesus, his soul is exceeding sorrowful, and at times his anger is stirred. As the man Christ Jesus, he cries, and groans, and weeps. As the man Christ Jesus, he bleeds, and quivers, and dies. All throughout, he never once evades pain because he is the Son of God. He never once borrows strength to bear pain from the fact or consciousness of his being the Son of God! He is fain to cry to God, like other men, and to welcome, like other men, the help and comfort of the Holy Spirit; yes, and of holy angels too. Apart from prayer to God, and the aid of the Spirit, and the ministry of angels, he has not, any more than the feeblest of you all, anything but manhood’s feebleness, in which to toil, in which to travail. Nothing more. For he is the man Christ Jesus.

This also is a blessed thing to know. In all the doings and sufferings of our Lord, you, brother, and I, may see what our common manhood, simply as manhood, may do and suffer, for he is the man Christ Jesus. Man’s capacity of attainment, man’s power of endurance,—what man is fit for, what man can stand, with the help of God, you learn from the human history of the man Christ Jesus! Surely it is good to consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; who resisted unto blood, striving against sin; who drank the bitter cup and hung on the accursed tree; and to remember always that in all that he was very man; a real man; the man Christ Jesus.

III. He is the man exclusively, pre-eminently, *par excellence*, to the absolute exclusion of all others, he is the man, the only man, complete and perfect. He stands alone as man ; the man Christ Jesus. Manhood, in its integrity, belongs to him alone. Not otherwise, O my brother sinner, could he be the man for you ; the man for me. Let one gather up in himself all the fragments of the manhood which you and I share together. Let him collect in one heap, as it were, every particle of glory and beauty to be found anywhere among the ruins of humanity. Let him take every great man's quality of greatness, every good man's element of goodness. And out of all the excellences and virtues of all the excellent and virtuous who have ever graced the world, and of whom the world was not worthy, let him form in himself a choice compound ; combining all, ennobling all, harmonising all. And let him come forth before you and me as the man thus made !

Would you and I, or either of us, own him as the man for us ? Ah, no ! As soon may we seek to reconstruct, from the scattered stone and lime, the time-hallowed house of prayer in which we were wont to worship reverently, as our fathers worshipped in it before ; as soon may we try to get the mouldering dust to take again the living warmth we used to clasp in our embrace ; as we may hope to scrape together the relics of fallen honour and dignity still outstanding in our race, and make of them the man we want, the man we need, the man for men, the man of men. Assuredly this manhood of ours is a structure very noble, even in its fallen state. Not in the high places of the field merely, and among the deathless names of history,—but deep down in the recesses of poverty, ay, and of abject vice and crime,—what traces are there of chivalry and generous self-sacrifice ; instances that might put the lazy luxury of sheltered innocence to shame ! But take the good you find in every one of

all the world's inmates,—and in none will you not find some good,—in the whole together you will find much. I speak of good, not in the highest sense of godliness, though even that is not wanting, but as men speak of good, in the sense of what is virtuous and praiseworthy. Take all the good, of all sorts, you can possibly discover in the records of good men of all the ages. Mix, compound, combine as you may please, you cannot get the man! For the man to meet my case, and satisfy the craving of my soul,—must be no thing of shreds and patches; but complete, perfect, an unbroken round, in himself one whole. No composite will do. He must be a single and simple unity; one, like the seamless coat, woven from the top throughout.

But humanity, manhood, has never been thus one, inwardly and intensely one, since the fall. Men there have been, good and great. But they have been fragmentary; a bit of manhood in each; often a very beautiful bit of manhood; but set, alas! and often well-nigh lost, in a confused, chaotic jumble of inconsistencies and incoherences! We cannot, brother,—neither you nor I,—we cannot be contented with any of them, even the best. We cannot pin our faith,—we cannot fasten our human hearts and hopes upon any one of them, or upon all of them together. And if any sanguine admirer of humanity, such as it is, comes to tell us; Here is one in whom all the perfections that have separately adorned the choicest specimens of human nature meet; and in whom none of their imperfections can be traced: we tax our memory; we survey the world about us and around us; we ransack history; we summon the excellent of the earth; we winnow them; we take the choice, the best of them. We do our utmost to weed out all their evil and frailty; we concentrate and condense into a very quintessence of worthiness all in them that is good; and we say; This ideal composite personage must be

the man whom you commend to us. But no ! He is not the man for us. No conglomerate can be our rock. It must be primitive and one. We want, we must have, the man ! Not the aggregate of men, but the man ! Not an expurgated accumulation, a purified heap, of the ruins of the temple ; but the temple ! Not humanity's best points, without humanity's bad points, worked up into a sort of model of humanity ; but humanity in its original type, living and one ! The man ! we say, the man ! And here is the man ; the man Christ Jesus. All manhood is his ; manhood such as yours and mine ; but untainted, incorrupt, one and indivisible, which yours and mine is not. He is holy, harmless, undefiled ; and separate from sinners. He is separate from sinners. And he is so, not in his conduct and character merely, but in his very birth, in his very nature, as man, the man Christ Jesus ! He is the man ; the one only perfect man ; the perfection, himself alone, of manhood. Not a man made up of the most select remains of manhood, among men as they have lived since the fall. He is the man, as God originally made man ; perfect, absolutely and indivisibly one and perfect ; the man Christ Jesus.

He is indeed thus, in one view, even as to his manhood, separate from sinners ; and from us, as sinners ; from all of us alike. That, however, is the very secret of his being the man for all of us alike. This separation from all of us alike makes him common to and for all of us alike. It makes him one ; the one whom each and all of us may embrace ; the man Christ Jesus ; the one only separate man ! For if he were merely one of us, fallen as we are, and corrupt ; if his holy qualities and virtues were merely such as the best of ours are ; and if his immaculate freedom from evil were, after all, of the same sort as that which good men among us seek, by various expedients of self-discipline, painfully and imperfectly to realise ; then he must be, to some extent, one-sided,

partial, and unequal; not fitted to be the type and model, the root and ground, the confidence and hope, of all redeemed and restored humanity. He might be the man for you, and not for me. There might be features in him commending him to your sympathy, which did not take hold of mine. The completest man that ever lived among the fallen sons of men,—the men of largest manhood, least limited by accidents or frailties, the man made, in the most genial and generous mould, not for a party, but for mankind, divides after all the opinions and affections, the votes and suffrages of his fellows. There are those who understand,—and those who simply wonder. There are those who sympathise, and those who censure, or who stare. There are some whom he charms into closest union with himself; but there are others who can only stand aloof; ready to admire, perhaps, but not able to love. Nay, even if we could fancy a man more complete still, more completely uniting in himself the excellences of all other men, and more completely excluding their infirmities and faults; we cannot reach the idea of one who would not be more to some than he might be to others; who might be everything to you, and little, if anything at all, to me.

No! If we would find one who is to be THE MAN, for me, for you, for all; we must ascend the stream of time, and fetch his manhood from beyond the flood, from beyond the fall! Then, in the unbroken image of God, manhood, human nature, the very self of man, was truly and indeed one! Since then the manhood among men has been manifold and broken and fragmentary. The man who is to gather up the fragments must himself be whole. The man who is to make us,—each one of us,—really one, must himself have the primeval oneness as his own! All men long for, all men look for, all men are prompt to welcome,—some one from among the people who is to be the head of all. None such can be got among those whom the fall has tainted. The only one who can be

the head of all, because he can be the same to all, is he who takes our human nature,—not as it is now, rent and torn by sin,—but as it once was; one in unbroken, pure, and holy innocence, one in immaculate likeness to the Holy One! And who is this but the man Christ Jesus?

Thus it appears—I. that Christ Jesus is the true man; really and thoroughly man; the common man; II. that he is very man; simply man; as to his human nature and experience, neither more, nor less, nor other than man; and III. That he is the one man; the only man in whom the manhood is unbroken and entire; the man unfallen, and therefore unfragmentary.

Three other observations remain to be noted, bearing on the offices he is fitted to discharge, as the man Christ Jesus.

IV. He is the man to mediate between God and man. To be the one mediator, he must be pre-eminently and distinctively the man; the representative man; the one man. The man, not only as being the one alone among his human fellows competent to be their head, gathering up in himself their common nature entire and pure; but as being the one alone of all men whom God owns as his fellow, sharing in common with him the divine nature, undivided, unalloyed, unchanged. If mediation is a reality; if it is a real transaction outside of us; not an internal process, but the adjustment of an external relation, as all Scripture teaches us that it is; the mediator must be a third party, distinct from both the parties between whom he mediates. He may and must represent both. But he is to be confounded with neither; he is to be merged in neither.

A man cannot have a mediator within himself; nor can he excoogitate or mentally create a mediator out of himself. He cannot be his own mediator. Every man is not a mediator; nor is it any man indiscriminately who can be a mediator. Nor

will an ideal man, springing, as it were, fully grown, from the thoughtful head or fond heart, the living ideal outcome and expression of those human instincts that are opposed to evil, and yearn for good, suffice. No. Not though we give it a local habitation and a name ; and call it the man Christ Jesus of Nazareth ! If there is to be real and actual mediation in the fair and honest sense of the term, the man who is to be mediator must be found for me ; not found by me ; least of all found by me in myself. He must not be a man elected, as it were, or discovered by me, or you, or us, or all men, as fitted to be the common impersonation of what is good and true in me, in you, in us, in all men. He must be born, not from among us, but from above. He must be the man ; not by assent or consent on the part of earth merely ; but by the decree of heaven ; or rather by the creative act of heaven's Lord, doing a new thing on the earth, bringing in anew the man, the second Adam ! For he must not only be in the highest and fullest sense one with God, the ruling party in the mediation. He must so receive his manhood into union with his Godhead as to be placed in the position of oneness in nature, not with the multitude of ordinary fallen men, but with the one original man, the first Adam, before he sinned.

Thus three conditions come together and coalesce as identifying the man who is to be the mediator. *First*, he must be the man, not as manhood exists and appears, marred and broken, among the children of the fall, but as it was in its original oneness and perfection, when man really bore the image of his Maker. *Secondly*, he must be the man, not as suggested by men's own instincts and impulses and cravings, but as directly chosen, appointed, introduced by God himself. And, *thirdly*, he must be the man, as being, in his wondrous person, one with God in the same true and real sense in which he is one with men.

All these three conditions meet in the man Christ Jesus. And they meet in him as the man who sounded the utmost depths of human experience, and in the strength of his pure and simple manhood, aided only by prayer and by the Spirit, withstood evil, mastered pain, and by suffering overcame the wicked one. Truly there is and can be but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. The man (1) made, as to his human nature, by special miracle, in the unbroken image and likeness of God. The man (2) who comes forth from God, bearing his commission to negotiate peace. The man (3) who in respect of his divine nature, unchanged, unchangeable, is one with God,—the Son dwelling evermore in the Father's bosom. The man, moreover, who still, in his connection and in all his fellowship of life and love with you, here and now, is very man and always man; the man thoroughly, the man throughout; one of you, one with you; knowing your temptations, himself tempted like as you are; touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Is it not he who is to heal the miserable breach, end the long alienation, clear up for ever the sad misunderstanding, and bring the Creator and his guilty creature, the Father and his lost child, together again in love? Is it not he, the man Christ Jesus?

V. He is the man to give himself a ransom for all. He who would do this,—he who would really deliver you by becoming himself your ransom,—must be one who is willing to take your place, and be your substitute; and fulfil all your obligations, and meet all your responsibilities. But more than that, he must be himself free, under no obligations, under no responsibilities of his own. He must be one who owes nothing to God on his own account; no service, or righteousness, or obedience; and one also who lies under no penalty on his own account; against whom no charge can be brought.

In whom are these qualifications found combined but in the man Christ Jesus? For his willingness, who can doubt it? "Lo, I come," he says (Ps. xl. 7). Nor does he say this in ignorance of what he is undertaking; as one of the unfallen hosts of heaven, blindly pitying men in their lost and ruined state, might be supposed to have said it. He sees the end from the beginning: and it is in the full view of all the toil and travail it is to cost him that he offers himself; "Lo, I come." Nor does he pause, or repent, or draw back, when he knows, by actual experience, in his human nature, the weight of the burden he has to bear and the bitterness of the bloody baptism he has to undergo; when, in the days of his flesh, he makes supplication, with strong crying and tears; praying in an agony, "Let the cup pass." It is still, "Lo, I come." "I delight to do thy will." "Thy will be done." Such is the willingness of the man Christ Jesus to give himself a ransom; a willingness to be accounted for on no other principle than the union and combination in him of divine and human love; divine love, deep as the heart of his Father and our Father; human love, tender and true as the heart of a very brother. To love us with the holiest love of heaven,—to love us with the purest love of earth,—is the exclusive property of the man Christ Jesus. In that willing love he says, "Lo, I come."

But willingness alone will not suffice. He who is to be your surety, your substitute, your ransom, must be no common man. If he is one who, as a mere creature, is made under the law, as all intelligent creatures are made under the law, he cannot answer for others; he can but answer for himself. Not even if he were the highest of the angelic host could he do more. All that he has, or can have, of attainment or accomplishment is no more than he is bound himself to render to God. Even if his submission to the will of God be of the most perfect character, and carried to

the utmost extreme of obedience and endurance of which he is capable, or to which he may be called, he must still say, "I am an unprofitable servant; I have done that which it was my duty to do." If there is to be an adequate ransom, therefore, he who is to give himself for that end must be one who, in his own proper person, is no mere creature made under the law; but uncreated, unmade, the Son of God, under no obligation on his own account, and free accordingly to undertake all obligation on yours. Nor is it less necessary that he should be exempted, in the human nature which he assumes, from all the liabilities of those for whom, in that nature, he is to be a ransom. He must be one in whose manhood there is no stain, and upon whom there lies no brand or burden of guilt. Only such a one can voluntarily take upon him your responsibility, put himself in your place, and bear away from you the blame and punishment by bearing it himself for you.

If the case stands thus, there is little wonder that when the question of your redemption is raised, as it were, in heaven, there should be blank silence and suspense on all sides, until a loud, clear voice, issuing from the throne, breaks the solemn stillness—"Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." And hark! the echoing response! "Even so, Father." Here am I. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." These oblations cannot satisfy justice, or expiate guilt. "The blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin." But "a body hast thou prepared me." "Lo! I come, to do thy will, to take away sin by the sacrifice of myself; I who am thy beloved Son; I, the man Christ Jesus."

Blessed surely are you who for yourselves acquiesce in this wondrous substitution; adoring its righteousness and its rich grace! Blessed are you who welcome in loving faith him to whom the Father points as the man of his right hand, the son of man, whom he maketh strong for himself; the man

Christ Jesus. And what blessedness to have to go now to all men, as you pray for all men, without exception, without reserve, and to say to every man, whatever his colour, his caste, his condition, above all, whatever his guilt and sin ; —“ Brother, thou needest a ransom, an infinite ransom, a perfect ransom, a ransom sufficient for the cancelling of all thy guilt and the perfecting of thy peace with God. No such ransom canst thou find in thyself, in me, in any angel. But, O my brother, God has found it. Brother, behold the man ! the man Christ Jesus.”

VI. He is the man to be testified in due time. A testimony for fitting seasons ; a great truth, to be attested as a fact at the right crisis of the world's history, to be ever afterwards preached and taught as the source of life to men doomed to die,—is this marvellous constitution of the manhood of Christ Jesus ; fitting him for being the one Mediator, the one Ransom. It is the testimony for which I am ordained a preacher ; an ambassador for Christ. It is the testimony for which I am sent among you with a message, a proclamation, in due time, at all fitting seasons. It is a testimony to all of you, I lift it up as a testimony to all of you, this day ; a timely, seasonable testimony, here and now. For now is the due time ; now is the fitting season.

I. It is my ordained and appointed testimony, or rather the Lord's by me, to thee, O sleeper ;—to thee, O doubter ;—to thee, whosoever thou art, who art living a godless, unholy life ; unrenewed, unreconciled, unsanctified. It is a testimony in due time to thee ! Due time indeed ! Ah ! it was due time for you when this man Christ Jesus, Mediator, Ransom, was testified to you, days, years, half a century perhaps, long ago ; when in childhood you almost felt as if you, like the little ones in Galilee, were clasped in the warm embrace of the man Christ Jesus ; when in sorrow, once and

again, you seemed to see the hot tears of sympathy rolling down the cheeks of the man Christ Jesus ; when in deep conviction of conscience and poignant distress of soul, you were fain to listen for a while to accents of mercy trembling on the lips of the man Christ Jesus ; when, in an hour of spiritual awakening, you were arrested on your way to sin by the calm look and word of him who said so seasonably and so lovingly to Saul—"Why persecutest thou me?" the man Christ Jesus. It was due time for you then. It was due time for you but yesterday, when Paul's preaching made you tremble, and you were almost persuaded to be Christ's. Oh ! that thou hadst known then, in due time, the things that belong to thy peace ! But, blessed be God, brother, it is due time for thee still. These things are not yet hid from thine eyes. To thee, this day, is again testified, presented before thee in word and symbol, for thy believing, loving acceptance, the man Christ Jesus. He is my testimony, or rather, I repeat, the Lord's by me, the Lord's, I say, the Spirit's testimony ; for is not the Lord, the Spirit, striving with thee ? Is not he witnessing in thee ?—in due time ? Yes ; in due time. For, O my brother, it may be the last time ! the last time thou art to hear any testimony at all about the man Christ Jesus, or the last time thou art to hear without being hardened.

2. It is the testimony with which I am charged to thee also, O downcast soul, who art afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, sin-laden, sorrow-laden, unable to see thy warrant for having peace and life with thy God. I testify to thee, the Lord testifies by me to thee, that all thou needest is in the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator, the Ransom ; and in him for thee. All that is Christ's is thine, freely, unre-servedly thine. When ? thou criest. Oh ! tell me when ? In due time, I reply. But what time is that ? How long have I to wait in darkness for light, in sickness for health,

in weakness for strength, in bondage for freedom, in straits for enlargement, in death for life? How long have I to wait? Wait, brother! But art thou willing to wait? Art thou waiting? Then, brother, hear the testimony. The time for favour, the set time, is come. "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

3. It is a timely, seasonable testimony to thee also, O man of God, my son Timothy, O child of God, who hast quiet peace in believing, and art walking at liberty, having respect to all God's commandments. The testimony to thee this day is of the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator, the Ransom. And it is for every due time, every fitting season. Ah! is there in your Christian life any time that is not a due time,—any season that is not a fitting season for this testimony? for the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator, the Ransom, being testified, through the Spirit, in thee, and by thee? What are all thy days and occasions, all thine exigencies and trials, all thine opportunities, all thy experiences, of whatever sort; but each and all of them fitting seasons, due times, for this testimony concerning the man Christ Jesus being accepted, inwardly realised, and openly exhibited?

For thyself, I urge thy recognition always of him of whom I testify, the man Christ Jesus. For, whatever the time, whatever the season, it is a due time, a fitting season, for his being testified to thee, by the Spirit, as being present with thee. As thou walkest the streets, or journeyest along the road, he talks with thee by the way, and opens to thee the Scriptures concerning himself; the man Christ Jesus, who taught thus of old in Galilee and Jewry, speaking as never man spoke. As thou sittest at meat, he breaks bread with thee, the man Christ Jesus, in whose living, personal, human and divine fellowship, the first disciples at Jerusalem did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. As thou

visitest the fatherless and widows in their affliction, he goes with thee, the man Christ Jesus, who in all their affliction is himself afflicted. As thou art wearied among the workers of iniquity whom thou art seeking to turn to righteousness, ready to complain, "Who hath believed our report?"—see, ever near thee, at thy side, the man Christ Jesus, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and whose prayer on the cross was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" O my friends, apprehend thus always, everywhere, as testified in due time and fitting season to be present with you, testified by the Holy Ghost taking of what is his and showing it to you, the man Christ Jesus. Apprehend this especially in holy ordinances; in the blessed communion of the Supper. And be not slow or slack, as being yourselves also testifiers, witnesses, apostles, preachers, to testify to each and all of those with whom you come in contact, and for each and all of whom you pray, to testify in due time;—to-day, for you know not if you shall have any other fitting season;—to testify to all, as you pray for all, concerning the man who is a "hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;"—the man Christ Jesus.

III.

THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST.

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”—2 CORINTHIANS XI. 3.

THE simplicity that is in Christ stands here contrasted with the subtilty of the serpent: and the instance given of the serpent's subtilty in his beguiling Eve illustrates what is meant by the simplicity which is opposed to it. In that first temptation, all on the part of God was abundantly simple; the command, not to eat of the tree, with the warning, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” was, in fact, simplicity itself. On the other hand, the subtilty of the tempter is apparent in the complex and manifold pleading which he holds with Eve. God has but one argument against eating; Satan has many for it; and there is no surer sign of subtilty than the giving of many reasons for what a single good one would better justify and explain. The apologist, conscious of a weak and indefensible case, usually has recourse to the multiplying of excuses, often enough irrelevant and inconsistent, as if the heaping of a number of weak explanations upon one another could make up for the impotency and insufficiency of each one of them apart. And the tempter also avails himself of the same artifice. He does not appeal to a single motive or depend on a single plea for success. He prevails by the variety rather than the strength of his weapons, as if he must first confound, before he can conquer, his vic-

tim. First self-love and self-confidence are appealed to ; suspicion is awakened ; and discontent begins to rankle within. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ?” Then, to lull asleep the just fear of God’s wrath, as well as to mar the full love of his goodness, the specious insinuation comes in, “Ye shall not surely die.” And to perplex the matter still more, obscure and ambiguous hints are thrown out as to the possible or probable issue of events, and the mind is cast loose on a vague calculation of chances and consequences : “Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.” Thus complicated is the subtilty of the serpent ; his lies, because they are lies, must be multiplied, to prop up one another. But truth is one ; and as there is nothing but truth, so there is nothing, and there can be nothing, but simplicity, in Christ : simplicity, as opposed to subtilty, is the characteristic feature of Christ himself, and of all that is his.

The simplicity that is in Christ ! It is a precious and blessed quality ; and it may be discerned all throughout his great salvation ; in every stage and department of that salvation.

I. In his own finished work of righteousness and atonement.

II. In the free offer of the Gospel founded thereupon.

III. In the fulness of believers as divinely one with himself.

IV. In their following of him as their captain and example ; and

V. In their expectation of him as their judge and reward, —in all these five instances of his grace, on the one hand, and of your experience and hope, as his people, on the other, this distinguishing element may be noted,—and in contrast with the subtilty of the serpent, we may trace the simplicity that is in Christ.

I. There is simplicity in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, as the servant of the Father, and the substitute, surety, and saviour of the guilty. It was in this character that he came into the world : and with entire simplicity did he sustain it. It was the single object for which he lived and died. Indeed, without an apprehension of this leading aim, the Lord's ministry on earth is unintelligible, self-contradictory, and, as we might almost say, marked not by simplicity, but by manifold subtilty. Every theory that has been or can be proposed of the suffering life and cruel death of Jesus, the Holy One of God, apart from the recognition of his vicarious character and standing, fails, and must fail, to satisfy a simple mind. The whole story is a confused, inconsistent, inextricable, incomprehensible enigma ; a dark riddle, as regards the government of God ; a strange anomaly that shocks the moral sentiments of men. It is the doctrine, or rather the fact, of his substitution for you, which alone harmonises and hallows all. On any other supposition, the evangelical records are as void of clear meaning as any complicated tale of romantic fiction. At the very best, they are vague anecdotes and reminiscences of a remarkable person, of whose conduct and fate no intelligible solution can be imagined. It is the atonement that gives significaney and unity to the whole. Let him be owned as the righteousness of God, in your stead, and the propitiation for your sins, what simplicity is there in Christ ! Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world !

That there is no mystery here,—nothing that transcends man's finite understanding, and baffles his restless curiosity,—we are far from saying. The substitution of that Holy One in the room of the guilty must ever be a wonder on earth, in heaven, and in hell. But oh ! is there not a simplicity in it that comes home to the heart of a poor despairing sinner ? He lies bitten by the deadly fiery serpent, stung with remorse

for sin, racked and tortured with the fear of eternal woe. Behold the serpent lifted up in the wilderness! Behold the Son of man, made sin, made a curse, for such precisely he is, for the lost world of which he is a most miserable portion, for sinners, of whom he is chief: behold this Jesus, living, dying, lifted up upon the cross, taking the place, doing the work, bearing the doom, of the condemned victims of everlasting justice;—what simplicity as well as worthiness in the Lamb that was slain! How clear, how definite and precise, how plain and unequivocal is this marvellous transaction, this real atonement for sin! “Deliver from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.” “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow.” Let the prisoner go free; let the guilty criminal be acquitted, justified, accepted; for an infinitely worthy substitute has been provided, to undertake all his responsibilities, to meet all his obligations, to answer every charge in law against him, every demand in justice upon him, to plead for him in the trial, to stand for him in the judgment.

Alas! that this simplicity that is in Christ should ever fail to satisfy. Nay, that it should so often—this very simplicity—be the very offence of the cross itself! But it is the policy of Satan to mar it, and by his subtilty to corrupt your minds from its simplicity, from the simplicity that is in Christ, and him crucified. Hence the endless questions he has contrived to raise in connection with it, respecting the secret counsels of the divine mind, the abstract principles of the divine government, and other the like great matters and things too high for us; as if it were our part to care for God, rather than for ourselves, in this transaction,—to be more anxious about his interests and concerns than about our own,—to view the cross, in short, rather in its possible bearing on the unknown arrangements of heaven, than in its actual application to the wants and woes that press so sorely

on the sinner here on earth. For it is a great thing for the enemy to have this whole affair transferred from the region of reality to the region of speculation ; and hence, taking advantage, not unfrequently, of the ingenuity even of wise and holy men, he tempts them to embarrass the simple fact on which the Gospel rests, with sundry more than doubtful disputations on the philosophy or rationale of it.

It is indeed a noble exercise of mind to aim at seeing how God in his glorious majesty, as well as we in our miserable need, may stand related to the events of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary ; nor is the inquiry an unprofitable or unlawful one. The doctrine of the Atonement is a most reasonable doctrine ; and to the understanding, spiritually enlightened, it opens up the largest views of God's character and ways, while it inspires the lowliest sense of the exceeding sinfulness of our sin. But it is still not to the wise and prudent, but to babes, that these things are revealed ; and as the Lord's new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, so do they delight in the simplicity that is in Christ. Ah ! it is first as a fact, as an actual substitution of himself in their room, that they, as sinners, come to know the Saviour's cross, and it is through their acquaintance with redemption, as a real and literal transaction of awful import between the righteous Father and his eternal Son on their behalf, that they come, by means of that transaction, to have a blessed and rapturous insight into the very mind and heart of the Godhead, to perceive that God is light, to feel that God is love.

For subtle intellects, however, the snare of Satan's subtilty is often too seductive. Tempted to look on this great sight from a divine, rather than a human point of view, approaching it, as it were, from the side of God's high throne, rather than from the abyss of fallen man's misery and guilt, they seem to consult for God rather than for them-

selves, to settle beforehand how God ought to act, rather than believe what he tells as to how he has acted. And so they frame a theory of atonement and redemption accommodated to their own ideas of what the general government of God must be. They speak vaguely of his public justice as the ruler of the universe, rather than of his private justice in his controversy individually with themselves. They profess to determine what the ends of his universal administration demand, rather than what every sin deserves. They find manifold good and plausible reasons of state, so to speak, on the part of God, for the atonement, instead of one sad reason of necessity on the part of the sinner. And thus it ends in their representing the plan of redemption, with a sort of undefined, abstract, and impersonal generality of statement, as an expedient for meeting an exigency, or getting over a difficulty, in the divine government, harmonising certain opposite claims and considerations, and enabling God to show himself good as well as holy, gracious as well as just ; and all this, with a studied avoiding of anything like the precise idea of a strictly real and literal substitution of Christ personally in the stead of the sinner personally ; as if, after all, the cross of Calvary were a kind of stroke of policy in heaven's cabinet and heaven's councils, a pageant, a spectacle, an exhibition merely, and not that dread reality which made all hell tremble and all heaven rejoice, as, in the very act of pouring out his soul an offering for sin, the Lord addressed himself to one of those whose place he was then occupying, whose guilt he was then expiating, whose release he was then purchasing—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

O my friends, let not your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Others may be careful and troubled about the many reasons that may be found in the principles of God's high government, to explain and account

for the atonement ; but for you, one reason is all that is needed,—one good reason,—alas ! too good,—that you have sinned, that without shedding of blood there is no remission, that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, that the blood of Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. Yes ! “ He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ” (2 Cor. v. 21).

II. As in his own finished work of righteousness and atonement, so in the free offer of the gospel as connected with it, we may see, and seeing, we may bless God for the simplicity that is in Christ. How simple, in every view of it, is the Gospel message ! How simple in its freeness. “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price ” (Isa. lv. 1). “ The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely ” (Rev. xxii. 17). How near does it bring Christ ! “ It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it ” (Deut. xxx. 12-14). “ The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith which we preach ; that if thou shalt con-

fess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 6-9). How very plain as well as pathetic is the Lord's pleading with sinners! "As though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20). "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18). How explicit, how unequivocal, are his assurances! "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD : wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. xviii. 32). "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). How clear, how undeniably palpable and peremptory, as it might seem beyond its being possible for any sophistry to torture it, is the declaration of the Lord's will that all men should be saved and should come to the knowledge of the truth, and his command that all men everywhere should repent.

Yet, need I say to you, my friends, that it is here very especially that Satan puts forth all his subtilty to beguile? You are not ignorant, I am persuaded, of his devices. You know how many reasons for doubt and unbelief he can contrive to set up against God's one reason for believing. Here am I—a lost sinner. There is Christ, a living Saviour. I am commanded to believe ; and if I believe not, I perish. But here is a test. Is there ever any one of all his reasons that is not founded on a perhaps? It was upon a perhaps that he persuaded his poor beguiled victims at first to risk their paradise, their souls, their all ; ye shall not *surely* die! And it is by a per-

haps still, or by many a perhaps, that he would beguile poor sinners, to keep them away from Christ. Thus, as to the Father: it may be that you are not elected; that your name may not be in the book of life; or as to the Son: Christ died only for his sheep, and you may not be one of them. Or again as to the Holy Ghost: as you may not be an object of the electing love of the Father, and the saving work of the Son, so you may not be a subject of the converting grace of the Spirit. You may have committed the unpardonable sin; you may have persevered in sin so long as to be beyond the reach of renewal and repentance; you may have offended God beyond the hope of his being ever appeased; or crucified the Son of God afresh, and put yourself out of the range of his sacrifice; or quenched the Spirit beyond hope of any revival: your sin may be so heinous, your backsliding so inexcusable, your hardness of heart so great, that though all other sinners might find mercy, there may be none for you. Or, yet once more, as to the supposed conditions of your being saved: perhaps you are not convinced enough of your sin, or sorry enough for it; or perhaps you are not repenting aright, or not believing aright, or not seeking and praying aright; or you may not be willing enough, or you may not be able enough, or you may not have knowledge enough, or faith enough, or love enough, and so on; with *may-bes* and *perhapses* heaped on one another, Satan, playing into your own natural fears and feelings, would keep you hesitating and halting, balancing scruples and weighing doubts for ever.

But it is upon no may-be, upon no perhaps, that the blessed Lord invites you to commit your soul to him. He does not multiply uncertain reasonings and pleadings. He has but one word to you. And that word is true. He has confirmed it by an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." He has sworn

by himself, "I, even I, am he." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He has but one voice, the voice of tender entreaty, Turn ye, turn ye. He has but one argument, the argument of the cross, a full atonement made for guilt of deepest dye, an everlasting righteousness brought in, a sufficient satisfaction made to the righteous law, and a welcome, without upbraiding and without reserve, awaiting the very chief of sinners.

O my friends, let no subtilty of Satan ever beguile you, or corrupt your minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, in his gospel offer of a free, a full, a present salvation. And be not careful to answer Satan's manifold subtilty; be content to set over against it the simplicity that is in Christ. Ah! there is nothing Satan likes better than to draw you into argument and debate; he would fain entangle you in his web of sophistry, by getting you to take up and discuss his specious reasonings in detail.

Thou poor soul, scarce escaped out of his net, thou knowest these wiles of the devil. It was in many meshes he tried to involve thee; it was by many ties he tried to bind thee; and while thou wast painfully seeking to unravel each miserable thread, to unloose each small and cunning knot, how did he keep thee fluttering and vainly panting to be free.

And oh! the first glimpse thou didst get of the simplicity that is in Christ! the first apprehension, the first taste, of the free, the simple, the unencumbered Gospel of the grace of God! What a relief! What a release! The scales fell from thine eyes! Like Samson awaking, thou didst tear off from thy limbs ten thousand chains of Satan's lying sophistry, as, with a sovereign pardon in thy hand thou didst walk forth out of thy prison, erect now and bold—in the broad light of God's reconciled countenance. It was then that by a single word of power and peace—"Come unto me"—"It is I"—"Thy sins be forgiven thee,"—thy Lord dissipated the entire host of thy

spiritual enemies ; and the new glad song of liberty he put into your lips was, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth ! Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers ; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

III. As there is the simplicity of actual reality in the great Atonement, and the simplicity of earnest sincerity in the gospel offer, so in respect also of the completeness of believers as one with Jesus, we may note the simplicity that is in Christ. Here we speak to you in the language of the apostle, as espoused to Christ ; presented to him as a chaste virgin to a loving husband ; and we would be jealous over you with a godly jealousy ; for duplicity now on your part towards him is nothing short of spiritual adultery, and is sadly inconsistent with the simplicity that is in Christ towards you. And what, the apostle adds (ver. 4), would you have ? Would you have one to come to you with another Jesus to preach to you, another Spirit for you to receive, another Gospel for you to accept ? Are ye so soon weary of the homely fare of the Lord's kingdom that ye would look out for new and foreign dainties ? Are your minds corrupted from the simplicity of Christ ? Alas ! it is to be feared that the serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtilty, has been busy with your minds too. He contrived to make her dissatisfied even with the simplicity of Paradise. Is he making you, in like manner, dissatisfied with the simplicity that is in Christ ?

Call to mind here, my friends, the circumstances of our first parents, and the subtilty of Satan in that first temptation that beguiled them. In the garden of Eden they had all things richly to enjoy. Of every tree of the garden they might freely eat. It was a simple grant of all the happiness of which their pure nature was susceptible that was made to them by their bountiful Creator. But the very simplicity of

the grant was a stumbling-block to them. The single test of their loyalty,—in itself simple enough too,—became irksome. Satan had a more excellent way. He would improve upon the divine method of Eden's holy joys, and make their position yet more perfect and more free. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It was a subtle snare. Ye are treated now as children; your innocence is the innocence of ignorance, and ignorance, too, is all your bliss. Be knowing; and be as gods.

So the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, causing her to be discontented with the simple profusion of Eden's blessings and the simple tenure on which she held them. And the like spirit of discontent he would fain cherish in you in regard to the simplicity that is in Christ. Of that simplicity you that are in Christ have some experience. It is the simplicity of a rich and royal liberality, alike in his gifts and in his manner of giving. How simple, in every view of it, is his treatment of you, my brethren that are his,—you that are in him. "Ye are complete in him." "All things are yours." All that he has is yours. The perfection of his righteousness, the fulness of his grace and truth, the holiness of his divine nature, the riches of his divine glory, his blessed relation of sonship to the Father, the unction of the Holy Ghost wherewith he was anointed, the love with which the Father hath loved him, the reward with which the Father hath crowned him, all his possessions, in short, and all the pure elements of his own inmost satisfaction, his rest, his peace, his joy, all, all he shares with you, simply, bountifully, unreservedly; and all upon the simple footing of your only being in him and abiding in him.

What simplicity is this! And yet, my friends, you may be tempted to weary of it. Even Paradise itself began to grow tame and insipid. The even tenor of its peaceful and placid way, the noiseless unbroken current of its smooth

waters of delight, was felt to be dull and slow ; and its inmates became impatient for a change. They disliked the level uniformity of mere creature innocency, and the humility of prolonged dependence on their most beneficent Creator. They would take a shorter and more summary road to perfection, they would be as gods themselves, knowing good and evil. Is there never anything like this, my friends, in your spiritual experience? Are there never seasons when the whole ordinary routine of your wonted spiritual exercises seems weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable? Is it a time of heaviness with you? of falling away from your first love? of collapse after excitement? of dulness after ecstasy, and listless languor following upon some agitating or exhilarating crisis in your history? Who shall prescribe for such a spiritual malady? What can we say to you that will not fall as a thrice-told tale upon your ear? To tell you again merely of Christ, to rehearse the old story of his sufferings and death, to assure you over and over of the sufficiency of his atonement, the freeness of his gospel, the promise of his Spirit,—to speak to you still of nothing but the efficacy of faith, and the power of prayer, and the consolation of the word, and the lowly duty of simple waiting on the Lord, that he may renew your soul,—all this is but to charm ache with air and agony with words, to patch grief with proverbs. It is all true, you say, incontrovertibly true: you know it all and you believe it all; and yet you feel wretched, and dull, and dead. Is there no more sovereign specific for ministering to a mind diseased? Is there no fresh expedient for reawakening the dormant feelings of the heart? Is there no royal road to a holier and happier state?

Alas! my friends, yours is the very frame of mind for Satan's subtlest policy to work on. To you he comes as an angel of light! proposing some specious novelties in doctrine,

refinements upon the commonplace threadbare preaching of the cross ; or suggesting new modes of worship or of fellowship, expedients for improving upon the ordinary means of growth in grace and progress in holiness. It is the frame of mind with which heresiarchs of all sorts, whether cold and calculating, or warm and enthusiastic, know well how to deal. Let church history, modern as well as ancient, testify ! At such seasons, brethren, be ye especially on your guard ! Seek not relief impatiently by devices of your own or of others who may plausibly profess to pity you. Wait on the Lord. Stand on the old paths. Let his word still be your stay ; continue in prayer, and faint not. Wait, I say, on the Lord. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Abide still in Christ. Look to him as at the first. Deal with him as a poor, empty soul, with a rich, full, loving Saviour. Go not elsewhere, but only to Christ. All things around you change. All within you changes. But keep on trusting in him. Though he slay me, he is the same. “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Let him not kindle a fire of his own, or walk in the sparks men may kindle. Let him still wait on the Lord, who will cause light to arise.

IV. Great and manifest as is the simplicity that is in Christ your Lord, in his work of righteousness and atonement for you, in the free offer of his gospel to you, and in his uniting you to himself, and associating you with himself in all that is his ; it is not less apparent in his guidance of you, as your captain and example. I will guide thee, says the Lord to the happy man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is not imputed, and in whose spirit there is no guile,—I

will guide thee with mine eye (Ps. xxxii. 9) :—a manner of guiding peculiarly and pre-eminently simple. It is opposed to the use of mere brute force, or the mere compulsion of threatening and terror, the bit, the bridle, the uplifted rod, the inflicted stroke, the mere scourge or rein of absolute authority, softened perhaps by coaxing, flattery, and cajoling falsehood. To be guided by the Lord with his eye,—what docility does this imply in you, what simplicity in Christ!

Observe the conditions of such a guidance as this. In all guidance of beings endowed with reason, conscience, and free will, four things are ordinarily indispensable; a rule, a motive, an inward power, an upward or onward pattern. In the case of men naturally, of you in your unconverted state, and out of Christ, what are these? (1.) The rule—the law of course; but it is the law which you feel, if strictly applied, must condemn you, and therefore presume that it must admit of relaxation. (2.) The motive—a mere sense of necessity, a feeling that you must do some homage. (3.) The power in you—your own frail resolution. (4.) The pattern before you—some one of the better sort among yourselves.

But mark the change, when, as pardoned sinners, ransomed criminals, adopted children, you are guided by the Lord with his eye. (1.) As to the rule, it is the law still, but it is not the dead letter, but the living spirit of the law. It is not the law in its condemning form of a covenant of works, bringing you under the sentence of death, and putting you to all subtle shifts to evade it. But it is the law as magnified and made honourable by our righteous and suffering substitute, the law as satisfied, and therefore justifying, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the law of liberty, the law of love. Then (2.) As to the motive, it is not the desperate desire of some sort of partial and precarious accommodation yet to be effected, but the sweet sense of full and perfect reconciliation already freely and graciously secured.

Again (3.) As to the inward moving power, it is the indwelling and inworking of the spirit of Christ. You are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man ; Christ dwells in your heart by faith. And (4.) As to the ideal, or model, or example, it is Christ himself. It is a guidance (1) according to the free spirit, and not the mere servile letter of the law ; (2) through the motive, not of a servile dread of still impending wrath, but of love to him who has first loved us ; (3) by the power of that Spirit abiding in us, who worketh in us, both to will and to do of God's good pleasure ; and (4) in the very steps of him who hath left us an example, and to whom we are to look as the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Surely there is great simplicity in such guidance as this. It is throughout the guidance, not of arbitrary force, but of reason and good feeling ; not of fear, but of love ; not of the flesh, but of the Spirit ; not of a miserably inadequate model, but of a perfect pattern ; not of the letter, but of the spirit of the law. The simplicity of it lies in its appealing to our highest sense of honour, our most generous and disinterested feelings of gratitude and honour. There is unity, and therefore simplicity, in the reference throughout to the one Lord, for the rule, the motive, the inspiring power, and the animating pattern.

But the subtilty of Satan, how manifold is it, how complicated are his insidious wiles, in this department, especially, of a holy walk, or of right and faithful discharge of practical duty. What a subtle science is casuistry, the science, in a special sense, of Satan, in which he is peculiarly at home. How ingeniously does he multiply his pleas in reference to all the several parts of evangelical holiness, the rule, the reason, the power, the pattern.

(1.) For the rule,—oh it cannot always be the strict unbend-

ing morality of the ten commandments. That standard it may be right and necessary generally to maintain, to guard against flagrant Antinomian and licentious abuses. But all men except recluses know that allowances must be made in social life, and regard must be had to circumstances, and within certain limits there must be an accommodation of what God requires to what the world will bear.

Then (2.) the motive of all you do ought doubtless to be not servile fear, but filial love, not the mere dread of being visited with punishment, but the desire to please, and it is plain that this motive has a very large and wide sweep, and might prompt many a generous and even chivalrous service and sacrifice in God's cause, from which the other motive might hold you excused. Still, practically, as things now are, it is a great matter if a Christian mixing with society keep clear of what is positively forbidden, and if nothing palpably wrong can be established against him.

And so also (3.) as to the power, it is admitted vaguely and generally, that you have a promise of divine aid to help your infirmities and strengthen you for the Lord's work and warfare. But this, alas ! does not hinder a large measure of the very same apologetic pleading of human frailty by which worldly men are wont to palliate their shortcomings and excesses.

And finally (4.) when we look to the pattern, how aptly does Satan teach us to evade the obligation of a full following of Christ, by suggesting sundry qualifications and limitations,—as that there are many things in which Christ, being divine, must be admitted to be inimitable,—until at last we come to feel practically, either that the imitation of him is a mere fiction, or that we are to fix for ourselves wherein, and to what extent it is to be realised.

O be not corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, as guiding his people with his eye according to the spirit of

his own holy law, through the sweet constraining influence of love to himself, by the power of his Spirit abiding in them as in him, and after the high example he has left them that they should follow his steps. Ah ! it is a blessed simplicity ! It is the eye of Christian love. It is the charm of Christian life. To me to live is Christ : Christ the rule ; Christ the motive ; Christ the power ; Christ the pattern. To live under Christ, for Christ, by Christ, after Christ ; to live, yet not I but Christ living in me,—and I living the life I now live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

V. The simplicity that is in Christ may be noted in connection with his second coming and glorious appearing. Here Satan has been expending not a little of his subtilty, throughout all ages of the Church's history, sometimes hiding this great doctrine, or contriving to have it kept in abeyance, and at other times complicating and embarrassing it, mixing up with it a variety of questions, scarcely, if at all, bearing on its real, vital, and practical import.

For, in truth, as to all that is essential and influential, it would seem to be simple enough. The Lord cometh as our Judge. He cometh as our exceeding great reward. We are to appear before his judgment seat ; we are to be with him where he is, to see and share his glory. And if we add that his coming for these high ends is to be apprehended by us as both sudden and near at hand, we seem to have the main substance of the believer's very simple, but very glorious and very awful hope.

Thus regarded, it is practically a most influential hope ; influential for its very simplicity. It sets you upon working, watching, waiting for the Lord. You work for him as servants, not wicked and slothful, but diligent, as those who must give account to him. You watch for him, with loins girt

and lamp burning,—not sleeping as do others, but watching and being sober, as children of the light and of the day, putting off sleep and drunkenness and all works of the night,—putting on the whole armour of light, looking up, looking out, as not knowing at what hour the Master may come. You wait for him. You wait, with what ardent longing! I wait for the Lord. Yea, more than they that watch for the morning. When shall the day dawn and the shadows flee away? Oh, when shall I welcome my returning Saviour? You wait for him with increasing ardour, as your growing likeness to him makes his fellowship more congenial; and sorrows and separations set you more and more upon the anticipation of future reunion in him. You wait, however, still, how patiently! reconciled to every hard duty and every irksome trial by the promise of the Comforter now, and the sure hope of glory at the last. Now to be thus working, watching, waiting for the Lord, how simple and how blessed an attitude! And thus to use for comfort and edification the great doctrine of his coming again, is surely to act according to the simplicity that is in Christ.

Other inquiries there may be, of interest in their place, respecting the times and seasons and events connected with the close of this world's dark history and the ushering in of a better day. But let not such detailed and complicated investigations, which surely after all are to the believer personally of subordinate importance, as well as of uncertain issue, be so blended with the one grand outline of Jesus coming again to receive his people to himself, as to mar the impression of its sublime and majestic unity and simplicity.

This was a warning needed in the early church, as the apostle himself testifies, when some used the doctrine to deceive and perplex; and he found it necessary, that he might prevent plain believers from being shaken in mind and troubled, to give an express and authoritative contradiction

to some of the rumours that had been raised and circulated. And no intelligent observer, either of the past or of the present, will deny the necessity of a similar caution now.

I ask you to distinguish here again, and here especially, between the complex and the simple : and I remind you that what really is to produce the right moral and spiritual effect upon your souls is not the crowded canvas and complicated scenery of a picture embracing all the particulars of a world's catastrophe,—no, not that, not that at all, but the one dread and holy image of Jesus, as he was taken up to heaven on Mount Olivet, so coming again, even as he was seen to go ! Be that coming when it may, it is still, as the polestar of the Church's hope, and the spur of her zeal, simple, solemn, in its very standing alone, isolated, solitary, separate and apart from all accessories of preceding and accompanying revolutions.

Yes ! it is not earthquakes, or tempests, or deluges of fire ; it is not falling empires, mighty wars and tumults, convulsions of all sorts over all the earth ; it is not Babylon doomed nor Israel restored, nor all the vast upheaving of the social fabric that must attend such vicissitudes—though it well concerns the slumbering nations to give heed to these things, and watchmen in Zion must never cease to ring in the ears of a scoffing world the knell of its approaching dissolution ;—still, I say, it is not these, not these altogether, nor any of them, that I have before my eye, filling my whole soul, and heart, and mind, when I turn weeping from the grave of buried friendship, or rise startled from the couch of despondency and sloth—no, but Jesus my Lord, himself alone, the centre of ineffable brightness and beauty. Angels and the redeemed are around him : but it is himself alone that fixes my regard, and I, poor miserable I, a sinner saved by his grace, a servant working for his hire, a watcher waiting for his coming,—I rise, I rush forth, I run to meet—nay, I am caught up to meet—my Lord in the air. So shall I be ever with the Lord.

1. To careless sinners we have a word to say. The subtilty of Satan is very apt to beguile and corrupt; but we have to remind you that there is a simplicity in Satan that is more insidious and disastrous still. There are those whom Satan leads captive at pleasure, and on whom it is really not worth his while to waste or expend his subtilty at all. When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: he has no occasion for the use either of his arts or of his arms. It is when a stronger than he cometh upon him, to overcome him, that he needs to have recourse to the violence of threats or the artifice of alluring wiles. It is for his victims that have escaped, or that are escaping from his grasp, that he reserves the practice of his stratagems: it is they who alas! from personal experience, are not ignorant of his devices. With you, who are going on contentedly in the broad road, he uses no refinement: to you his lies are simple enough; nay he scarcely needs more than one; his old lie with which he began, "ye shall not surely die." Ah! it may well be that all our discussions of nice and intricate points of conscience are unintelligible to you. You have little sympathy with the strange varieties of frame and feeling that attend a spiritual awakening, and you cannot comprehend the turns and windings of a poor soul, hunted as the wounded hart in the desert, and panting for the water brooks. How it should be so very difficult to assuage the anguish of a guilty conscience, or to pacify the fears of a broken heart, or to get a sinner to believe in the forgiveness of sins, or to make him continue to rely on the mercy of heaven, you cannot understand at all; it seems all to you so simple, easy, natural; so much almost a matter of course; that you should be let alone now and let off somehow at the last. But I beseech you rather to look to the simplicity that is in Christ than to lean on the simplicity that is in Satan. The simplicity that is in Satan! Truly simple enough are they that believe his fond and

simple lie! But hear another voice, simple enough too: "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." And hear another voice, yet the same, simple enough too! and awful!—awful for its simplicity. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched forth my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me!" "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found! Call ye upon him while he is near!"

2. To anxious souls I would say, Let not the subtilty of Satan distress you beyond measure. And above all, let it not surprise you! Count it not strange that you fall into divers temptations! When you are thus tempted, do not yield to the crowning temptation of imagining that your case is strange and your experience singular. This is a great snare. It ministers to a certain feeling of half-unconscious self-complacency, as you brood over difficulties and doubts and embarrassments; fancying that never was there soul-exercise, never soul-distress, like yours. Be sure that there hath no temptation befallen you but such as common to men. And remember your way of escape is not the way of combating in argument the subtilty of Satan; but the common, far safer and simpler way of simply acquiescing anew, and ever anew, in the simplicity of Christ! For you are no match in special pleading for the Master of that science! The question of your peace with God, and your comfortable walk with him, is one that never will be solved or settled beforehand by any processes of subtle reasoning. You must solve and settle it experimentally. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Venture your soul upon the simpli-

city that is in Christ, his simple faithfulness, the simplicity of his promise,—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Let Satan perplex the question as he may. Let him conjure up doubtful disputations by the score,—by the hundred. Let him summon a very legion of dark surmises to disconcert you! Be you simple. Be you decided. Linger not. Hesitate not. Do to God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—the justice you would be ashamed to deny to an earthly friend. Simply believe that the Father means what he says when he beseeches you to be reconciled to him in his Son; that the Son means what he says when he cries, “Come unto me, ye weary;” that the Holy Ghost means what he says when, together with the Bride, he says, “Come, take of the water of life freely!”

3. To you who believe I would say,—Let there be simplicity in you corresponding to the simplicity that is in Christ. In all simplicity, accept Christ as your substitute! In all simplicity, comply with his call to come to him, and through him, to the Father! In all simplicity, abide in him and be satisfied with his fulness! In all simplicity, yield yourselves to his gracious and loving guidance! In all simplicity, be ever looking out for his glorious coming! All on his part,—in his treatment of you, in his offering himself for you; in his giving himself to you; in his keeping you and making you complete in himself; in his guiding you with his eye; in his coming again to receive you to himself, that where he is you may be also;—all is simple, free, generous, unreserved! There is no keeping back of anything. He opens his heart, his hand, to you? Let all on your part, in your treatment of him, be simple too! Be upon honour with him! Be guileless, frank, cordial, in your reliance with him; your submission to him; your working and waiting for him! So will you taste the blessedness of fully realising the simplicity that is in Christ. Yours will be the enlargement of heart

that, springing out of a simple faith in Christ, takes in all the fulness of his glorious gospel. Yours will be the alacrity, and cheerfulness, and joy of running with heart enlarged in the way of the divine commandments, and walking freely as well as humbly with your God. Your path will be as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. All embarrassment, all constraint, all reserve, being at an end; your fellowship in the Spirit is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV.

DEATH AND LIFE WITH CHRIST.

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”—COL. III. 3.

It is the Christian state that is here described ; the state of the real Christian. And it is described in a twofold aspect ; as a state of death, and a state of life. The paradox is not peculiar to this passage. We have it in Galatians ii. 19, 20. But it is put here in a very pointed form. Let us look at both sides.

I. “Ye are dead.” This is strong language to be addressed to true believers. But it is very gracious language. It is the reverse or opposite of what the apostle had said before—“Being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (ii. 13). Blessed be God ! from that death you are delivered. But you are dead still. And it is your being dead still that explains your deliverance from the other death. I say, your being dead still ; now and always. For the apostle does not speak of a single event, consummated at once, so as to be past and over ; but of a prolonged and continued experience. He says not merely, Ye died or have died, with Christ, as on your first believing in him, and being made partakers of his death. That would be true. For, in conversion, the sinner does indeed die with Christ, being buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so, he also should walk in newness of life. But the text speaks not merely of your dying once, but of your continuing to be

dead. Ye are dead. The expression is quite indefinite. Ye became dead, and ye are dead still.

It would thus appear that there are three stages of this death of believers. In their original state of unconcern and unbelief, they are dead. In their effectual calling by the Holy Ghost, they die. And ever after, so long as they remain on earth, they are to reckon themselves dead indeed (Rom. vi. 11).

But, in another view, it is the same death throughout: the same state of being, only regarded, successively, in different lights. This death is, in other words, a name for your character and condition, as you are in yourselves. That character is enmity against God. That condition is liability to wrath. You are dead, as not naturally loving, or willingly subject to the Holy God, but estranged from him. You are dead, as lying helplessly under his righteous sentence of condemnation. The only difference, at different stages of your experience, lies in your apprehension of this death, this character of enmity, and this condition of condemnation, as really and justly your own.

1. Naturally, and until the Holy Spirit work a decided change upon you, in your effectual calling, you do not feel that such really is your character; you will not admit that such righteously is your condition. You put away from you the charge of enmity. It seems to you that you do, in some tolerable measure, love God, and that you do, to a considerable extent, serve him faithfully. It is true, indeed, as you must confess, that you are occasionally sadly apt to forget God, that you sometimes grow weary of his word and his worship, and that you take some little liberties with the strict letter of his commandments. You acknowledge also that you must plead guilty, at times, to the cherishing of thoughts and the indulgence of passions, the uttering of words and the allowance of practices, which perhaps may not

be quite pleasing to him, and no doubt there are things in your temper and conduct which might be otherwise ordered if you were always remembering God. But all this is not inconsistent with a very fair amount of real reverence and regard for your Maker and his authority; any more than the frequent carelessness or waywardness of a stirring child must necessarily be incompatible with sincere love, at bottom, towards his parent. You cannot be constantly serious and on your guard. Perhaps, indeed, you might be more so than you are. You pretend not to be free from the error and infirmity of a heart, that may, at times, be too thoughtless of God, and too much engrossed with other objects. If that be the charge brought against you, you can understand its meaning and admit its justice. But to say that you have no love to God at all,—nay, that you positively hate God,—is more than you can admit. You are conscious of no such aversion. You can plead guilty to no such enmity.

And in regard to the other element of this death, you put away from you also the sentence of wrath. For not realising your natural character as God's enemies, you cannot realise your condition as condemned. You feel indeed that you are not perfectly righteous, or altogether free from sin. You do therefore deserve some punishment at the hands of God, and you may need to be taught, by suffering some of the consequences of your heedlessness and folly, the necessity of greater prudence in future. Of course, also, you acknowledge that if God were to insist on the rigour of law to the utmost, he might perhaps sentence you to eternal death. But it seems to you that it would be strange if he did so. He must surely deal with you more leniently, and as you think also, more fairly. And so when you hear of a judgment to come, you cannot imagine, that in your case, it can be a very serious or alarming prospect; or if it were, you cannot think it would be just.

In this state of mind you are dead. You may be living in pleasure. But you are dead while you live. And your death consists in your being enemies to God and condemned by God. It is not merely your insensibility, or the deep slumber of your soul, or the dream of innocence and security, that constitutes this death. It is not your insensibility, but that to which you are insensible; your guilt and condemnation in the sight of an avenging God.

Suppose that under some strange hallucination the doomed felon, with the very halter fixed round his neck, should make his escape for an hour from the inevitable scaffold, and assume his place in some hall of commerce, or around some festive board; he is dead, as a rebel, a convicted and sentenced criminal. But what is it that constitutes his death? Not the fitful madness which shocks his old companions as he thrusts his ill-omened presence among them; but the fact of his crime and the certainty of his doom. Let his drunken idiocy pass away. Let him once more realise his position. It is death still.

This, then, is God's word to the unconverted. Ye are dead. As God's enemies, and as doomed criminals, ye are dead. You may be alive in your own opinion, but it is as Paul says he once was alive. It is without the law. "I was alive, righteous enough, safe enough,—ay, I was even a favourite of heaven. Sin in me was dormant and dead. It seemed to me that all was right. Alas! it was a delusion altogether. I was alive without the law. The instant the commandment came; the instant I was made to see and feel the full extent of God's claims upon me, the searching spirituality and holiness of his law, the law of perfect purity, the law of perfect love; sin revived, it got strength and power to convict, to condemn me, sin revived and I died. Yes, I died."

2. This is the second stage. In your effectual calling by

the Holy Ghost you are made to recognise this death as real, and to acquiesce in it as just. Your enmity against God, and your condemnation by God, become sensible to your souls ; and in a way which makes you feel the enmity to be inexcusable and the condemnation to be righteous. When the commandment came, I died ; I lost all the life I thought I had, all the rights, all the strength, I once relied on. I died, a lost and guilty sinner, no longer justifying myself, accepting, owning, the sentence of death as justly mine.

Ah ! it is good thus to die,—to die thus now. Better that your sin should find you out, better that the commandment should come, and you should die now, than that the terrible discovery of what you are, the shock of the awakening to the reality of your death, should be reserved till the hour of doom. For your sin shall find you out. The commandment must come.

Behold the awakened sinner, out of Christ, by himself, alone, meeting his offended God, and seeing him as he is, in the hour of awakening, in the day of judgment. No fond persuasion has he now that he has loved or served that God sufficiently. Instinctively he feels at last that it was in a very different spirit, and after a very different manner, that he ought to have honoured and obeyed that holy loving God. It is all in vain now to call to mind decencies and charities, forms of devotion and deeds of humanity. The truth now bursts on him ; that the Eternal is a Sovereign ; that he is a Father ; and that to give less than what a sovereign may claim and a father ask, with whatever phrase of compliment or duty, is but to cover over real disaffection and radical estrangement of heart from him. At any rate, there now he stands, before the sinner's startled eye, inflexible, uncompromising, terrible in his wrath. In the hands of an angry God, the arrested convict is held fast. He may affect to be angry too. Fain would he accuse the Just One of unfairness. Fain

would he charge the God of love with harshness. But his own heart condemns him, proud and stubborn as it is. There he stands, resisting God, yet relentlessly doomed by him for ever.

Were it not better far that your eyes should now be opened to that scene of holiness and of wrath, of unbending law and unrelenting judgment, which one day, either now or hereafter, you have to face? Were it not every way better to have the bitterness of this death over? And may it not be so to you? Was it not so to Paul when he said—"I died"? "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 19, 20). When the law kills, it may be by a severe stroke. It may be a sharp, a stinging, death. The humiliation, the shame, the grief of it, may be trying to flesh and blood, to heart and conscience. There will be solemn awe and terror in your awakening to the apprehension of your being indeed dead. But there will be no resistance, no resentment; no resistance to the holy sovereignty which you now feel you have slighted; no resentment against the righteous sentence of condemnation which you would now no longer, even if you could, evade. For when you thus die, do you not die in and with Christ? "I through the law am dead to the law." The law kills, condemns, slays me, empties me of all conceit of life, inflicts and executes on me the grievous sentence of penal death. But lo! near me, making himself one with me, making me one with himself, in this very death, the Son of the very God whose law condemns me, the living Saviour! Let me make his death mine, as he made my death his. If die I must, let me die in Christ. Let me be crucified with Christ. Oh! the blessedness, of thus perceiving, for the first time, what this death really is, in the cross of your dying Redeemer, and feeling yourselves to be dead indeed only when you die with him. Not that you have less seriousness or sadness, in

this way of becoming acquainted with this death, than in the other way, of having trial of it by yourself alone without Christ. No! There is more, incalculably more. There is a deeper insight into the claims of God's holy supremacy, and the corresponding inexcusable guilt of all your attempts towards a compromise with him. There is a livelier alarm at the thought of your prolonged estrangement from him. There is shame to which the unbroken heart is a stranger, and sorrow such as a sense of God's love alone can cause. But along with all this, there is unquestioning submission, so that you justify God, even in that death to which he condemns you. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? You are crucified with Christ. You are dead in him.

3. As in your effectual calling, so in all your subsequent life on earth, you continue to be thus dead with Christ. In fact, you become so in your own esteem more and more. Your growing acquaintance with the character of God, with the excellency of his law, the reasonableness of its requirements, the fulness of his grace, the riches of his salvation, discovers more and more your natural enmity against him. And then, is not your condemnation under the righteous sentence of the law more and more thoroughly realised? Your very union with Christ, by which you become interested in all the efficacy of his death, gives you a more searching insight into the meaning, the reality, the righteousness of that death, as endured by substitution for you, and as now, in all its actual import, made really, personally, consciously your own. Always you bear about with you the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in your mortal bodies.

Ye are dead. In and with Christ ye are habitually, constantly, dead. Your sin is ever before you. And the sentence of your sin is ever acknowledged, recognised, embraced by you, as really and justly yours. Ye are dead, and this very

death is, in truth, your life. For who, or what shall slay you now, seeing ye are dead already? He who is low fears no fall. He who is already and always dead, what fear can he have of any farther death? What fear now of anything that may inflict death? Does the law again point against me the thunders of its deadly threatenings of wrath? What harm can they do me, since I am dead already? Are carnal ordinances and rudiments of the world, ceremonial rites and observances, brought up in formidable array to condemn me for their neglect? How can they reach one who independently of them is otherwise, and by a prior right, confessedly and justly condemned before? I am dead, and against the dead no charge can be brought. I am dead, and over the dead no enemy has power. I am dead, and to the dead there is no more fear of death. This is my safety. This alone is my liberty: to be always, in myself, dead. To cease for a moment to be so is to aspire to a life which I cannot sustain. It is to provoke the adversary to a new trial of strength with me, and to brave anew the judgment of God's law. It is only as one dead that I am freed from sin, from its terrors, its temptations, its triumphs; and the more I die with Christ, entering into the meaning of his cross, reckoning myself to be condemned with him, the more am I able to defy every attempt to subject me anew, in any other way, to condemnation. To every challenge at any time which would require me now to answer for myself as a criminal or as a rebel doomed to death, my reply is that I am dead already. Or rather, it is Christ's reply for me. "He is dead in me. My death is his." And I, believing through grace, acquiesce: "Yea, Lord, I am dead in thee. I live no more myself. It is thou who art my life. I live; yet not I: thou livest in me."

II. As it is said of those who live in pleasure, that they are dead while they live, so it may be said of you who believe

in Jesus, that you live while you are dead. And your life is hid with Christ in God. Follow Christ now, from earth to heaven ; from the scene of his agony here below, to the scene of his blessed joy in the presence of the Father above. Enter within the veil, into the holiest of all, the very inmost recess of the sanctuary above, into which your Saviour has passed. What is the nature of this most sacred retreat ? and what the Saviour's manner of life there ? In the bosom of the Father, in most intimate fellowship with the Father, he who liveth and was dead is now alive for evermore. And there, where he is, your life now is. It is with him, for he is your life. It is where he is, and as his, in God. And it is hid there.

1. Your life is with Christ. It is in fact identified with him. He is your life, and he is so in two respects.

(1) You live with Christ, as partakers of his right to live. And oh ! how ample is that right. For who is he with whom your life is now bound up ? He has life in himself. In his own nature he is originally and eternally the living one. For you, who are dead, to be attached to him, ensures your life ; since then all his right and prerogative of life becomes yours. Your life with Christ is thus the counterpart of his death for you ; and as he was willing to make your death his own, so you need not scruple or hesitate to make his life yours. For he has store of life enough for himself and for you ; and you need have no fear of drawing too largely on that store. Even his dying with you and for you did not exhaust it. Neither will his taking you to live with him.

If I am struggling desperately and ready to sink in the billows of an angry sea, and if a friend cast himself in to save me, I may, by hanging upon him and clinging to him with the gripe of death, merely drag him down along with me to the depths of a watery grave. Or if he undertake to answer for me in the judgment, my miserable case may but serve to

overwhelm him in the participation of my shame and guilt. He may merely succeed in destroying himself, by involving himself in the responsibility of my offence. But Christ, having life in himself, has power to lay down his own life, and has power to take it again. When I cleave to him, a wretched perishing sinner, the billows of wrath go over his head, and he tastes the death to which I am doomed. But nevertheless he lives still, he rises from the midst of the waves, he walks on the waters once more, and I, grasping his outstretched hand,—nay, rather grasped by him in his strong arm,—am forthwith in safety, with him, on the shore. He makes himself indeed answerable for my sin ; and for any man, or angel, for any creature, however high, or however holy, to do this, could not but entail on him everlasting destruction, eternal death. But he is no creature. He is the ever-living Son, righteous and holy. And the burden which must have weighed down any other substitute or surety to hell, and that for ever, he can sustain and yet live. What a privilege, then, to have my life with him !

And may this indeed be my privilege ? asks some poor trembling soul. Wherefore should it not ? On what terms is it to become yours ? In what character are you to appropriate it ? In the character simply and exclusively of one dead. For what do you read as your warrant ? “Ye are dead, and your life is with Christ.” To be dead is the only requisite preliminary to your life being with Christ. And is not this your case ? Are you not dead, as an enemy to God, righteously condemned by him ? Then rejoice to know and believe that your life is with Christ. Ah ! do you still hesitate ? Are you waiting anxiously and impatiently until you find in you some symptom of a new-born spiritual life before you lay hold of Christ, or let him lay hold of you ! Nay, nay, have done with this longing after a righteousness or life of your own. You feel that you have none. Be con-

tent that you should have none. Remember that it is not as one living, but as one dead, that you have your life in Christ. Yes, there is life in him for you, even for you who are dead. "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I am dead, then I live.

(2.) As you live with Christ, in respect of your new right to live, so you live with Christ in respect of the new spirit of your life. For not only must you who are dead receive a title to live. You must besides receive power to take advantage of your title, to avail yourselves of it, and actually to live. And for both alike you must be indebted to Christ. Your right to live, and your power to live, are both with Christ. Your right to live is with him, as having life in himself. Your power to live is with him, as quickening whom he will. He has the residue of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is given through him, in respect of that very righteousness of his through which he liveth, as just, and justifying many. If you would have this life, then, have it with Christ, with him altogether, and with him alone. He alone has it in himself, and he alone can make it yours.

And still, once more, remember, it is as those who are dead, that you have this life with Christ, this right and this power to live. Say not, then, that you cannot live; that you have not life enough even to lay hold of the life which is with Christ for you. Neither the right to live, nor the power, is with you. Both are with Christ. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). While ye are yet without strength, you are raised from death to life, by the mighty working of the same power which brought Christ again from the grave. "Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. v. 14). Say not that you cannot comply with this invitation, or accept this offer. He who calls you is the same who commanded the sick man

to rise and walk, who said to the dead man in his tomb, "Lazarus, come forth." You are dead. But your life is with Christ. His very word to you, when he says, Believe and live, is itself life; and dead as you are, he makes you hear his voice. And in hearing it, you have power to obey his call, to embrace the Saviour, and to be saved.

2. Further, this your life, being with Christ, must be where he is. It must therefore be in God. He is your life. And where he is, there is your life. But he is in the bosom of the Father. Thence he came to accomplish the purposes of humiliation. Thither he returned when these purposes were fulfilled, when the Father's holy name was glorified, and the Father's work of redeeming mercy finished. Your life with Christ, therefore, is in God. For in his favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life.

It is in God as its source and fountain. For all life, especially all spiritual life, is from the Father. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John v. 26). The Father raised him from the dead. He "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). It is true that Christ had power to lay down his life, and he had power to take it again; and his own divine power was manifested in his resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power. It is true also that the Eternal Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, was the immediate agent in this transaction. Still, the life which Christ condescended, as the risen Saviour, to receive on your behalf was from the Father, as its fountain. It had its source in the Father. And so also your life, with Christ, is in God, as its source. It is God that justifieth. It is he who reconciles you to himself. The grace, the favour, the love, the free forgiveness and full acceptance, in which this life consists, all flow from the Father; they are all his

gifts to you, and for them all, you are continually, at every instant, dependent upon him.

And as your life with Christ is in God as its source and fountain, so it is in God also, as its seat and centre and home. The life which the Father imparts finds its dwelling-place in himself. It consists in his favour, and it is exercised in his fellowship. The love, flowing from him, returns and rests in him. We love him who first loved us. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalm cxvi. 7). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Again, your life with Christ is in God, as its model, or type, or pattern. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1st John iv. 16). Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image. Living in God, we are conformed to his likeness. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love" (*ib.* iv. 8). So, on the other hand, your life with Christ being in God, you know God, and dwell in him. And, knowing him, you love. It becomes your very nature to love, even as it is his nature to love. Dwelling in him, you dwell in love; loving him because he first loved you, and for his sake loving your brother also. And your love in a measure is like that of God himself; pure, holy, disinterested, free, as his is; self-sacrificing, too, and self-denying; being that love which "suffereth long, and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4-7). Thus imbibing his own spirit of love, and being kind even to the evil and to the unthankful, ye are the children of your heavenly Father, and are perfect, even as he is perfect.

Once more, your life with Christ is in God, as its great end and aim—its motive and object. It is to him now that you live, for his glory, for his will, for his pleasure. Believing in Jesus, you are to the praise of his glory, to whose grave you are debtors. And your main concern now is, that God may be glorified in you still. This indeed is your very life, to glorify God. You live, then, only when you are seeking, desiring, longing for the advancement of his glory, and are willing that in you he should be glorified, whether by life or by death. Such is your life in God, if it be life in Christ. For such was, and such is, his life in the Father.

3. Finally, this life with Christ in God is hid. It must needs be so, since it enters in within the veil. There is, of course, a sense in which it is not, and cannot be hid. Its fruits and symptoms are manifest. But its principle is hid. For as the movements of the living body are sensible and palpable, while the mystery of that unseen vital energy which sets the head and the heart in motion, baffles all inquiry : so while the outward walk is patent to all on earth, the life of the soul with Christ is hid in God in heaven. Your life is hid. It is an affecting characteristic of this life that it is hidden. It suggests several touching ideas of security, of spirituality, of privacy, and of seclusion.

Your life is hid, for security. It is hid with Christ, in God, where no coarse eye can reach, and no rude hand can touch it. It is hid from the storm and the tempest. It is hid from the relentless accuser of the brethren. It is hid from the secret counsel of the wicked and the strife of tongues. It is hid from the unwise and flattering friend. It is hid from the spoiler and the foe. It is hid in God's pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle, in the hollow of his hand, where your name is engraven on his palms. It is not hidden so that it can ever be overlooked or forgotten by

him. But it is hidden so that sin and Satan and the world seek in vain to come nigh to it.

What blessed confidence may this impart even to you whose life may seem to be but as a quivering spark. Feeble, flickering, unsteady as it may be, such as the slightest breath might extinguish, God takes it into his keeping, hides it, cherishes and fosters it, until it be revived. Have you life at all with Christ, be it ever so precarious, as if scarce a pulse were beating?—Is there but the faintest sigh, the quivering of but a limb, to show that the weary and wounded soldier on Satan's dreary battle-field is not quite dead? Left to languish on the plain, with the keen and cutting night breeze chilling his stagnant blood, and the feet of many a charger trampling him in the dust, and the swords of hostile bands flashing over him—how soon would the spark of life be extinct! But your life is not liable to such exposure, fallen and sore stricken as you are. It is hid with Christ in God. You are his hidden ones; safe in the hollow of the rock in which he shelters you, safe under the shadow of his wings. Your life is hid with Christ in God. It stands not in the opinion of men, who, judging according to the outward appearance, may condemn those whom God hath justified. It depends not upon your being able to meet Satan's charges, or even your own accusations of yourselves. It is not in human approbation, or in a tampering with Satan's soothing wiles, or in the complacency of a formal self-righteousness, that now you live. As to all these, you are dead; with them all you can now dispense. For your life is hid with Christ in God, where he will care for it well, if only you leave it entirely to him.

Your life is hid, as a life that is no longer carnal and earthly, but spiritual and heavenly. It is not an outward life of profession merely, or of ceremonial observances. It is life in the hidden man of the heart, life itself hid with

Christ in God. Hence it is altogether independent of what the apostle calls the rudiments of this world. It is quite inconsistent with subjection to ordinances (ii. 20); you need not now concern yourselves about such a life, or such a notion of life, as these could sustain. You are no more striving to make good a poor and precarious life for yourselves, based upon any such outward and formal righteousness. As to any such life, or any such title to life, you are dead. And you are contented and thankful to be dead; your life now is inward and spiritual. It is a real life of inward and conscious reconciliation to God; inward and conscious walking with God. It is life in God; life therefore hid in God.

Hence it is a life of intimacy; and as it were of confidential fellowship. You are the men of God's secret (Job xix. 19). You are his friends, to whom he makes known what he does. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant" (Ps. xxv. 14). "His secret is with the righteous" (Prov. iii. 32). To men generally it is only the outward aspect of the works and ways of God which is revealed; and that they are at a loss to understand. In the things he has made, they see little more than what furnishes matter for vacant wonder or curious speculation. And in his providential dealings how much is there that is dark! "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" How hard a thing do the ungodly and the worldly find it to be even to imagine an explanation of his procedure, to conjecture what may possibly be the meaning of his actings. To them the whole is a mighty maze, without a plan. Things good and evil, pleasant and painful, terrible and joyful, are mingled and jumbled together in inextricable confusion. What can they do but live at random, and as if by chance; receiving whatever comes as best they may; letting the world pass, and taking things as easily as they can?

But if your life is hid with Christ in God, you stand in his counsel. You are in his secret, as it were, behind the scenes. You have the key to all the mysteries of his government. To you now all is not a chaos or a blank, a confused pageant or a troubled dream. You are, as it were, admitted into God's chamber; you have an insight into his plan and purpose as the God of grace and of judgment. The present chequered scene is no longer a mere enigma to you. You know what it means. God's long-suffering patience with the wicked, whom he would fain win to himself; his dispensations of fatherly love towards his own people, whom he corrects and chastens; his warnings of wrath; his tokens for good; the benefits with which he loads his enemies; the trials with which he visits his children; the whole scheme of his administration; however incomprehensible to others, is not now all dark and hard to you. Hence you can stand serene in life's shifting vicissitudes and death's dread terrors; amid the war of elements and the crash of worlds. You know that all is well; that all the Lord's ways are just and true. You are not apt to be taken by surprise. It is yours to see, in the ceaseless march of all things here below, the unfolding of the plan of redeeming love. And in the very dissolution of universal nature, you can hail the advent of the new heavens and the new earth.

Once more, your life with Christ in God is hid, as being a life of seclusion from the world's eye, and separation from the world's sympathy. The world cannot discern or appreciate it. They cannot believe in its reality. They have no apprehension of its spirit. Yes; you have a rank that is concealed from the carnal mind. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John iii. 1). You have riches of which the world cannot conceive, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The pearl of great price is yours, though none but you recognise it. You carefully hide and keep it. Almost all things about your life are hidden. It has its hidden source and spring ; Christ living in you ; Christ in you the hope of glory. It has its hidden motive, for which the world will give you no credit ; to you to live is Christ. It has its hidden food ; you have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of ; the hidden manna ; the word of Christ dwelling in you richly. It has its hidden joys, and its hidden sorrows too, with which a stranger may not intermeddle ; its hidden history and exercise of soul in the privacy of your secret closet ; in deep experiences of the heart, known only to your Father and your God.

But though your life, as believers, is hid, its outward workings and movements, its fruits and effects, are and must be, visible and palpable. It is a life which manifests itself. The natural life is in large measure hid. Its principle, its manner of being, its sustenance, growth, decay, revival, much about it is hid. But it acts outwardly in word and deed, in speech and behaviour. So also the spiritual life, however hid it may be in many aspects of it, must come out in unmistakable proofs of its reality. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23). "Add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity" (2 Peter i. 5-7). "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). Out of the abundance of the heart let the mouth speak. From within, from the Spirit in you, let rivers of living waters flow.

Then your life is not to be always hidden. "When

Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Its being hidden is, in one view, an advantage meanwhile to this life ; as a hiding-place from the tempest's fury, or from war's alarm, be it ever so lonely and so dreary, is welcome to the traveller or the patriot. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment." Yes ; for a little moment. But only "until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. xxvi. 20). But the traveller rejoices to walk abroad when the blast is over. The patriot is glad when persecution yields to peace ; and he is free to quit his close retreat. For it is, on the whole, a drawback on the enjoyment of this life with Christ in God that it is hid. The believer often feels the lack of sympathy, and the pain of being misinterpreted and misunderstood. He looks forward to the day when clouds and shadows shall flee away, and all shall be open fellowship and joy.

Finally, for unbelievers as well as believers, for all of us alike, it is a solemn question—What is your hidden life ? For every man has a hidden life ; a life that he lives apart from even his dearest bosom friend ; a life that he lives alone ; in his lonely musings ; in his solitary closet ; in the deep recesses of his inmost heart. What, O my brother ! is your hidden life, your real life ? For your hidden life is your real life. Your life outwardly, before men ; in the sight of the world and the church ; may be all that could well be desired. But what of your inner hidden life ; your real life, I repeat ? Is it life with Christ in God, the life of love ? Be very sure that, whatever it is, the day will declare it. "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke xii. 2).

V.

ISAIAH'S VISION.

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims : each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar : and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips : and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, Here am I ; send me.”—ISAIAH VI. 1-8.

I DO NOT intend to consider this chapter historically, or biographically, or exegetically. I do not inquire into the significance of the date assigned to this ecstatic rapture or vision which it records ; although the place it occupies in the course of the Lord's dealings with his people may and must have some meaning. Nor do I raise any question about its place in the prophet's own life ; as for instance, whether what he describes was his preparation for his prophetic mission generally, or his preparation for some one special prophetic mes-

sage. And I abstain from any critical examination of the passage. I wish to deal with it practically, as indicating what must be the common experience of every servant of the Lord, be he a minister in his church or an ordinary member, if he is to be truly fitted for undertaking any work for the Lord ; and if he is to be welcomed when he offers to undertake it.

Of course, I approach this chapter, with this practical view, under the guidance of the apostle John. In the twelfth chapter of his Gospel, summing up in dark enough colours the general issue of the Lord's ministry with respect to the Jews as a people, John explains that seeming anomaly, the ill-success of such a preacher, by a reference to what had been foretold in prophecy ; especially in the prophecy of Isaiah. He quotes two passages. " But though he had done many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him : that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them " (John xii. 37-40). And with reference to the last passage, quoted from this sixth chapter of Isaiah, to connect it more closely with the question on hand, John adds : " These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him " (ver. 41). It was Christ's glory therefore that Isaiah saw. It was of Christ that he spoke. The scene is Messianic. Christ is in it. And, as I hope to show, Christ is in it all through.

He is in it, in the sight which the prophet gets of the Lord ; God in Christ glorious in holiness. He is in it, in the the altar of atonement and the live coals of the ever-fresh sacrifice of himself thereon. He is in it, in the instantaneous efficacy of one of the live coals from off the altar, applied by a

divine agency to the prophet's person, to cleanse him from all his guilt, and give him courage before the Lord. This Messianic character of the vision or ecstasy will appear more clearly if we consider :

- I. What Isaiah saw and heard (vers. 1-4).
- II. How Isaiah felt (ver. 5).
- III. How his case was met (ver. 6).
- IV. The subsequent offer and command (vers. 7, 8).

I. What the prophet saw (vers. 1-4). There is no special stress to be laid on the term Lord, as used here. It is not the incommunicable name of essence, Jehovah ; but the title of dominion, of mastership and ownership, Lord. It is Jehovah who is seen ; but he is seen as ruler, governor, king. The awe of his appearance is in the circumstances or surroundings.

He is upon a throne, high and lifted up. It is the throne of absolute sovereignty ; of resistless, questionless, supremacy over all. The Lord reigneth ; thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.

He is in the temple, where the throne is the mercy-seat, between the Cherubim ; over the ark of the covenant, which is the symbol and seal of reconciliation and friendly communion. And he is there in such rich grace and glory that the whole temple is filled with the overflowing robe of his redeeming majesty. His train, the skirts of his wondrous garment of light and love, filled the temple.

Above, or upon, that ample overflowing train of so magnificent a raiment stood the Seraphim. These are not, as I take it, angelic or superangelic spirits, but the Divine Spirit himself, the Holy Ghost ; appearing thus in the aspect and attitude of gracious ministry. In that attitude he multiplies himself, as it were, according to the number and exigencies of the churches and the individuals to whom he

has to minister. He takes up, moreover, the position of reverential waiting for his errand, and in an agency manifold, but yet one, readiness to fly to its execution. For the ecclesiastical fancy or figment of Seraphim and Cherubim, as constituting a sort of hierarchy or prelaey in the heavenly hosts, may surely be regarded as now exploded. The Cherubim are on almost all hands admitted to be representative emblems of redeemed creation, or of the redeemed church on the earth. And I cannot think it wrong to give to the Seraphim, in this, the only passage in which the name occurs, a somewhat corresponding character, as representative emblems of the active heavenly agency in redemption. Nor is the plural form any objection.

I find, as I think, a similar mode of setting forth the multiform and multifarious agency of the Spirit in the opening salutation of the Apocalypse. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia : Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne ; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. i. 4, 5). John invokes the blessings of grace and peace upon the seven churches he is addressing. He does so in the usual apostolic manner. He brings in the three persons of the Godhead ; the Father first, "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come ;" the Son last, "from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth ;" and between the two, "the seven Spirits which are before the Father's throne." It is the Holy Ghost, waiting to go forth from the Father, to apply and carry forward the threefold work of the Son, as prophet, priest, and king ; and to do so as if he were becoming seven Spirits in accommodation to the seven churches ; as if each church was to

have him as his own ; yes, and each believer too. So the Holy Spirit appears to Isaiah in this seraphic host ; many, but yet one ; one, in the uniformity of the threefold posture ; the veiled face towards the glorious throne ; the veiled feet upon the gracious train ; the unveiled wings left ready for flight anywhere and on any mission.

With this great sight voice and movement are joined. There is a voice. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory." It is not necessarily the voice of the Seraphim, though that is the ordinary view. I would rather take the words abstractly and indefinitely. There is a reciprocating, or, as it were, antiphonic cry or song. It is not said among whom. Of course the readiest reference is to the Seraphim. But the text does not require that ; it is literally "this cried to this" (*marginal reading*). And the attendance of an angelic quire, of all hosts of heaven, may be assumed. A voice of adoring awe fills the august temple with the echoing sound (ver. 3). The voice occasions commotion, excitement, shaken door-posts, the smoke of the glorious cloudy fire filling all the house (ver. 4).

Assuredly Christ is here. He is here as revealing the Father ; the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. And he is here, not merely outwardly, in outward manifestation ; but inwardly ; in the deepest inward contact and converse of the soul with God.

I am carried within the veil ; within the veil of God's glory as declared in his visible works ; within the veil of my sensible recognition of that glory ; into the shrine, far back, beyond either veil ; where, face to face, I see, where, in a real personal interview, I personally meet my Lord ; the sovereign Lord of all ; God in Christ ; overflowing in redeeming love ; glorious in holiness ; filling the whole earth with the glory of his holiness.

II. How the prophet felt (ver. 5). It is a thorough prostration. The prophet, the seer of this great sight, is smitten down. He falls on his face as one dead. He cannot stand that Divine presence ; that living, personal, Divine presence ; abruptly confronting him in the inmost shrine of the Lord's sanctuary, and the sanctuary of his own heart. What the Lord really is, thus flashing on his conscience, shows him what he is himself. Undone ! unclean ! Unclean in the very sphere and line of living in which I ought to be most scrupulously clean !

The lips!—The lips which, like David in that Psalm of penitential sorrow, I have asked thee, O Lord, to open that my mouth may show forth thy praise : the lips which I have consecrated as a sacrifice to thee ; the lips which should keep knowledge and feed many ; ah ! how unclean ! And how have I been reconciling myself to their uncleanness ; and to the uncleanness of the lips of the people among whom I dwell ! How have I been using my lips among them ! How have I been regarding their use of their lips among themselves ! They say that their lips are their own. Have I been tempted to acquiesce in their saying that ? Ay, and even sometimes to say it myself. In my intercourse with them, does my trumpet give an uncertain sound ? Is my speech, or my silent and tacit influence, accommodated to their ideas ? Am I ceasing to tell on them for good ? Are they beginning to tell on me for evil ? Do I dwell among them without being vexed by their evil conversation ? Is my own conversation, my way of thinking, speaking, acting, taking, almost half unconsciously, the unspiritual, ungodly, frivolous, and worldly tone of theirs ?

Ah ! it is high time for me to place myself where Isaiah was, and to prostrate myself as Isaiah did. And let it not be as if this uncleanness of my own lips and tolerance of the uncleanness of the lips of the world were a casual infirmity,

an outward excrescence upon my character and life. Ah, no! It is myself; my very self! I am a man of unclean lips! The unclean lips constitute my very manhood, my very nature. They are the sign and index of what I am. It is not that I have them, hanging as an uncongenial burden around me. But I am what they express. They proceed out of my heart. They are what my inner man, my whole inner man, truly is. It is my nature that I feel to be so deeply, thoroughly, hopelessly vitiated. Not only are my lips unclean, I am myself a man of unclean lips! That is my very nature. That is myself. Myself as I see myself, when mine eyes see the King, the Lord of Hosts.

III. How the prophet's case is met. He is within the veil; in the holiest sanctuary; the Holy of holies. He is in the immediate presence of the Holy One; shining forth from between the Cherubim, over the mercy-seat, in the full glory of his sovereignty and grace; the full-orbed and rounded glory of his holiness. And he is there, in that awful presence, not as a prophet, a high and honoured functionary, awaiting the instructions of his royal Master, in dignified and reverential state; but as a poor, wretched criminal, helplessly lost and ruined; undone; unclean.

But lo! an altar; the altar; the altar of propitiation and atonement; on which lies the ever freshly bleeding victim; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. There, full in his view, is that altar, with its sacrifice; present to him then, though future; present, I thank God, to me, though past. There it is; a great reality; a great fact! Yes! It is there: altogether irrespectively of Isaiah's thoughts and feelings,—and of mine. It is there, apart from me; in spite of me; a fixed, accomplished fact; a finished work; a real, present altar; a real present sacrifice; acceptable to God and available for me! That where I am, there

that is, that altar with that sacrifice, is a gleam of light in the gloom. It is something to see the Saviour on the cross.

But of what avail is that altar, with its ever-burning fire of sacrificial incense, to me? It is there, where I am. That is something; it is much. But may it not be there, simply as near to God; accepted of God? And here am I, alas! a poor sinner, undone, unclean; forced to own my deep and helpless far-offness from God. But lo! thanks to ever-abounding grace, there is an agency at work that brings the great and ever fresh transaction of the altar freshly home to me. One of the Seraphim; the Holy Spirit in one of his indefinitely varied modes of operation, suited to the diversities of churches and of individuals; one of the Seraphim; the Holy Spirit in that one particular adaptation of his ministry which specially meets my case; flies, as if in haste; seeing that I am fainting, and fearful lest I die; flies on the wings ever ready for such flight; flies with what is as good as the entire altar and its sacrifice, to apply it all effectually to me; with a live coal in his hand taken with tongs from off the altar he flies to me. And knowing my sore better than I know it myself, not wandering vaguely and tentatively over my whole frame, but fixing at once on the seat of my distress; he touches my lips! My lips! my unclean lips! the very lips whose uncleanness is all but driving me to despair. The very part in me, the special sense of sin, that is causing me to cry out, "Woe is me! O wretched man that I am!" he touches with that coal. And the coal not dead but living. It is a coal from off the altar whose victim ever cries, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore." With a living coal from that living altar, directly and immediately, the blessed Spirit touches me at the very point of my deepest self-despair.

And the effect is as immediate as the touch. Nothing comes in between. There is no waiting, as for a medicine to

work its cure ; no bargaining, as if a price were to be paid ; no process to be gone through ; no preparation to be made ; nothing comes in between. Enough that there are, on the one side, the unclean lips, and on the other the live coal from off the altar. To the one let the other be applied, graciously, effectually, by the sevenfold, myriad-fold, agency of the Spirit who is ever before the throne on high. The prophet asks nothing more. He feels the warm touch of the live coal from off the altar. He hears the voice, as of him who said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Lo, this has touched thy lips, and iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged."

Here let us pause, and ask grace to enable us to realise this experience as our own.

1. Let me isolate myself, and be alone with God ; alone with him within the veil. Let me see the Lord, not mediately, through his works and ways ; no, nor by means and signs and sacraments ; not by reasoning and reflection inferring him ; but by spiritual insight and intuition beholding him ; myself alone beholding him alone ! Let me be brought individually and personally face to face with him in the inmost shrine of his living personality. I saw the Lord ! Let me see the Lord. I have heard of him. I have thought about him. But let me see him. With eye opened by the Spirit let me see himself. Let me see him verily and indeed, as he is in himself and in his relation to me. Let his own beloved Son show him to me. Let him show to me the Father ! His Father and my Father in him ; awful and uncompromising in his sovereignty ; overflowing in the riches of his grace ; holy, holy, serenely holy ; terrible ; glorious in holiness. Let it be a real true unveiling of him on the one part,—a real true seeing of him on the other. I see him ; "I have heard of him with the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth him. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

2. So Job was smitten down ; emptied of all the right-

eousness he pleaded so nobly, against his gainsaying friends, but yet too unadvisedly in the sight of his God ; prostrated before the one only righteous and holy Lord God. So Isaiah cried, Woe is me, for I am undone. So let me be smitten ; so let me cry, blessed Spirit ; thou thyself opening my eyes and causing me to see the Lord on his throne, in his temple. Seeing the Lord ; sovereign in his power and grace ; holy, inviolably holy, in his nature and in all his relations ; seeing him, not afar off ; not as if I gazed on some glimpse of his shining garment from a distance and among a crowd ; seeing him very near ; with a real true vision, making him a real true person to me,—and oh ! how holy !—holy in his sovereignty, holy in his love !—oh, how holy !—what can I do ? what can I say ? Alone, in such a presence ! Woe is me ! Undone, unclean ! Unclean all over ; out and out, through and through unclean. My lips unclean ; and all that they express unclean ; my whole inner man ; my entire inward moral and spiritual frame. I cannot open my mouth to utter a thought ; I cannot think a thought that might be uttered in words ; but there is uncleanness in it ; unholiness ; ungodliness ; carnality ; selfishness ; worldliness. Holy Spirit ! Spirit of holiness ! Oh ! make me feel this uncleanness in my lips, as indicating my thoughts, but too congenial to the uncleanness of the lips of others. Make me feel this conformity to the world to be no mere accident of my life, but my very nature. Let me see God as he is, that I may see myself as I am. Let the terrible contrast between his holiness and my uncleanness sink me almost in the very gulf of despair, as I cry, Woe is me ! for I am undone. “ Then said I, Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts ” (Isa. vi. 5).

3. But no. It need not be despair. Blessed Spirit, Spirit of all grace, thou hast another sight to unveil to me ; another

experience for me to undergo. Thou takest of what is Christ's, and showest it to me. Thou appliest it to me. Thou makest Christ mine. I see his glory : his glory as it shines in the lustre of that throne on which unbending sovereignty, rich redeeming grace, and unsullied holiness, sit enshrined before my wondering eye, all harmonized by him. I see also his glory, as it sheds its calm sad radiance on the altar on which he lies, the bleeding Lamb of God, the propitiation for my sin. Yes ; I see, as I doubt not Isaiah saw, his glory in that altar. Blessed Spirit ! let it be so. I see the glory of his cross. I see his glory as Jehovah-Jesus ; Immanuel ; God with us. I see his glory as made sin and made a curse for me. I see his glory as loving me, and giving himself for me. I see his glory, as it is ever freshly unfolded to me,—not a past, but an ever-present glory. Yes ; it is a present glory of Christ that I see ; present, blessed Spirit ! through thy gracious working. Thou makest it present to me. For I do not merely gaze on a past transaction in that altar, of terrible though loving significancy. I grasp in it a present saving benefit. I not only behold the altar ; I have fellowship with it. Thou, O blessed Spirit ! makest me partaker of it. Thou bringest it near to me. Thou touchest me with it ; the sorest of my sores, the uncleanest of all my uncleannesses, thou touchest with it effectually.

For thus, once more, I see the glory of Christ in the immediate cleansing of my lips, upon their being touched with a live coal from off the altar. Here especially I see his glory ; the glory of the sovereign and instantaneous virtue of the mere touch, on lips the most unclean, of a live coal from off the altar. For surely it is surpassingly glorious to see, to see by feeling it, how, without any process or any interval of preparation, the fire of the altar has but to come in contact with my deepest stain of depravity and guilt ; and I hear the voice, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is

taken away, and thy sin purged." For, indeed, over all the seeings of Christ's glory here indicated this is paramount. This is the crowning sight of his crowning glory. To see his glory, as investing the eternal throne with a new halo of sovereignty and grace and holiness, blended in a new aspect of mingled majesty and mercy, on which the undone and unclean can look without utter ruin ; to see his glory, as erecting and setting forth an altar, on which there is ever freshly flowing the blood of an infinitely meritorious and efficacious sacrifice for sin ; to see his glory, as the Holy Spirit takes of what is his,—a live coal from off the altar,—and shows it by applying it to me ; touching the worst element in my case, with all the virtue of the altar whose coal he uses ;—all that is much. But more, if possible, more is it to see his glory in the electric word, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Ah ! this instantaneousness ; this instant flash from the two opposite poles,—the live coal from off the altar and my unclean lips,—issuing at once in perfect peace, and perfect willingness to be the Lord's ;—is not this, after all, the chief glory of Christ which Isaiah saw, and which I, in the Spirit, see as he saw ? Oh ! what glory may I see in Christ, not only all through his manifestation to me of his wondrous grace, revealing the Father in his full perfection, and providing for my return and reconciliation ; but very particularly, in my sense and experience of the instantaneous efficacy of one look to him, one touch from him, to set me free from all my guilty fear and bondage, and put me in the way of rendering a free and filial and loyal service to him who loved me and gave himself for me.

IV. The subsequent offer and command—"Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, Here am I ; send me. And he

said, Go." Two things are noticeable here : the grace of God in allowing the prophet, thus exercised, to be a volunteer for service ; and the unreservedness of the prophet's volunteering.

1. It is a signal instance of grace on the part of the Lord that I am allowed to be a volunteer. The Lord has a right, a dearly purchased right, to deal with me very differently. He might issue a peremptory command. He might utter his stern voice of authority, and at once order me. But he knows what is in man better than to treat thus the broken and relenting heart of one whom he has smitten by the brightness of his glorious holiness to the ground, and healed by the touch of his ever-living sacrifice of blood. He is considerate. He is generous. His servant is not coerced or constrained, as with bit and bridle. He has the unspeakable privilege and happiness of giving himself voluntarily, and, as it were, ultroneously, to the Lord, who willingly gave himself for him. He simply hears, or overhears, a conversation in heaven ; a question asked and waiting to be answered.

It is an intimation, a hint, of work to be done, service to be rendered, a message or embassy to be discharged. No order is issued. No special call is addressed to him or to any one in particular. But can he hear the announcement unmoved ? Is not the statement of the fact enough for him ? The question, he might say, is not addressed to me. It is a consultation or conversation in heaven. It says nothing to indicate its being meant for me on earth. Surely it were better that an angelic spirit, one of the countless hosts crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," should undertake the task, whatever it may be, than I, but now undone, unclean, and scarcely yet able to realise the purging of my sin. But no. The Lord's servant recognises, and with deep gratitude feels, the Lord's gracious condescension in leaving it to him to make, as it were, the first move. I hear thee, Lord, saying, Whom shall I send ? I might shrink,

I might hesitate, as a poor guilty sinner, whom a glance of thy holy eye slays. But cleansed and quickened by that live coal from off the altar, the altar on which I see thee ever freshly pouring out thy precious blood ; bought with a price ; bought to be thine, thine alone, I needs must say, Here am I ; send me.

2. The unreservedness of that reply is wonderful. It is a reply in the dark, and without any hint or stipulation for light. Not a question is asked ; not a condition or stipulation annexed. It is not, " Send me if the work is to be easy ; send me if the embassy is to be honourable ; send me if the issue of the errand is to be prosperous and successful." Nor is there anything like making terms, as for a suitable recompense of reward. There is no hanging back under the plausible guise of self-distrust. " If I can but persuade myself that I am adequate to the post ; if I dare but think that thou countest me qualified, then, Lord, send me." No such double-dealing is there here ; no such contingent faith, masking voluntary unbelief. It is no half-hearted purpose, conditional on circumstances ; but the full, single-eyed heartiness of one loving much, because forgiven much, that breaks out in the frank, unqualified, unconditional self-enlistment and self-enrolment in the Lord's host,—“ Here am I, send me.” Hence, accordingly, the crowning proof and pledge of his conversion, his cleansing, his revival, his calling or commission. He now first learns, now for the first time, after he has committed himself beyond the possibility of honourable retraction or recall, what is the errand darkly indicated by the heavenly voice, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ?

At first there may be secretly the feeling that any mission on which such a master may send me must have in it the elements of intrinsic glory and assured triumph. But as it turns out it is far otherwise than that. The case is altogether the reverse. The mission is to be a mission of judgment.

It is to be of a sternly retributive character. It is to seal the final condemnation of the people to whom it is addressed. The message may be in itself one of mercy ; the full and free proclamation of the gospel. But in my hands, at my voice, it is to have a hardening, and not a softening effect. Men's minds are to be judicially blinded ; their hearts are to be judicially hardened. It is no pleasant office that is to be discharged ; no smooth and smiling sea on which he who has been all but shipwrecked himself is thus to launch forth, on a cruise that, however well meant and well fitted for saving them, is to issue in the shipwreck of the entire fleet, infatuated and undone.

But what then ? Does the freshly-quickened volunteer withdraw his offer ? or qualify it ? or raise any question at all about it ? Does he say—"Nay, but, Lord, this is more than I volunteered for ; more than I anticipated, or could well anticipate ; more than I would have felt myself warranted to undertake, if I had not been led on in the dark ? I did not mean to commit myself to this." No. He simply asks one question ; a brief one ; comprised in three words—"Lord, how long ?" It is a question indicating nothing like reluctance or hesitation ; no repenting of his offer ; no drawing back. He makes no claim to be released from his engagement. He craves no indulgence. For himself he has nothing more to say. It is only in the interest of his people, and out of deepest sympathy with them, that the irrepressible cry of piety and of patriotism bursts from his lips—"Lord, how long ? how long ?" And all the satisfaction, all the comfort, he gets, is distant and dark. It is but a faint streak of light that breaks the heavy gloom. The disastrous issue of his ministry is to last till the desolation is very thorough and complete. Down the stream of years and ages he is still to see the gospel message he has to bear becoming more and more a savour of death unto death to the people whom he warmly

loves. Still there is always a remnant to be saved. There is an element of vitality in the root, and stem, and branch of David, that is indestructible. The plant may be cut down and cut over, again and again, ever so many times. But there is a holy and a living seed in it that will be ever and anon springing up in a holy and living growth ; partial indeed, and local ; yet preparing the way for the final flourishing of the tree and the spreading of its branches over all the earth. Such hope, however limited and deferred, is enough for the gospel volunteer. He does not recall, virtually he repeats, his offer—"Here am I, send me."

Here, and by way of practical application, let me return back from the end to the beginning of this great evangelical experience.

1. Do I find myself staggering at the call, Go ? Am I inclined to draw back, to make difficulties, or yield to difficulties presented to me ? Am I beginning to feel the Lord's work and warfare, for which I volunteered into his service, too slow or too hard ? Am I growing weary, desponding ; formal and perfunctory, because heartless and hopeless, in my mission for Christ ? Has that no connection with my own spiritual state ? May it not betoken a sad, and perhaps growing, unconcern about my own personal sanctification ? Am I not becoming insensible or indifferent to uncleanness, if not in act, yet in thought and speech ; my own uncleanness and the world's ? Ah ! when I cease to be thoroughly, out and out, a volunteer in the Lord's missionary army ; when my response to his summons is no longer altogether spontaneous and warm ; when I am discouraged by ill-treatment and ill-success ; when I am listless and weary ; let me look well to my own personal religious state. How is it with me as regards my own soul ; its thirst after God ; its recoil from all ungodliness ? May there not be creeping over me a sort of

carnal and worldly sloth? a willingness to connive at and tolerate evil; in others perhaps first; and then also in myself?

2. Does this discovery disquiet me? Does it grieve me to find that I am less cordial in saying, "Here am I; send me;" because I am getting reconciled to things as they are, in my own lips, and the people's lips among whom I dwell? Let me suffer the Lord to bring me into a close, personal, solitary dealing with himself. Nothing short of that will meet my case. Let there be a process of enlightenment, conviction, revival; secret, deeply secret; in the inmost shrine of his holy presence; in the inmost shrine of my spiritually awakened soul. Let it be sight; faith becoming vision; enduring as seeing him who is invisible, Immanuel, God with us. No name or notion merely; but a real, living personality; the Lord sovereign, living, holy; showing himself to me; speaking to me; laying his holy hand on me, a sinner! I am smitten down! I see and feel the guilt of uncleanness; my own and the people's. Especially I see and feel the guilt of my inclination to indulge, to tolerate, to treat it as a venial sin. Yes; so to treat that foul leprosy of uncleanness, disguising itself, it may be, under idle words. These very words condemn me. I loathe myself on account of them, for they are my very self. In the awful presence of the Lord, sin is exceeding sinful; guilt is unbearable; ruin is real, inevitable, irreversible. There is an everlasting undoneness. Woe is me!

3. But let me not, O blessed Spirit, let me not be faithless but believing! Let me not grieve or vex thee! Thou not merely showest me the great altar of atonement, on which blood infinitely precious and sufficient to cleanse from all sin is ever freshly flowing. Thou touchest me, even me, unclean, unclean with all my own uncleanness, and all the uncleanness, moreover, which I have suffered and encouraged in those whom I should have been influencing otherwise. Yes! Thou

touchest me! Oh that I may willingly let thee touch me,—the uncleanest part of me,—with a drop of that precious blood ;—the least of the live coals from off the altar! Then, blessed Spirit! open my ear, that I may catch the sound of that gracious voice of thine. This has purged thy guilt! that voice of thine so lovingly in harmony with what the victim on that altar was wont, in his own person, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee.

4. This is the best and only effectual preparation for serving as a volunteer in the Lord's host: to love, because forgiven; to love much, because forgiven much. And it is so, not only at first, but always; not only in the beginning of your Christian calling, but all throughout, to the very end. The experience must be continually renewed. And it may be so in either order.

It may come in the way of there being first a personal awakening. It must so come at first; and it may and will be so coming ever after. In your first conversion, or in some subsequent revival, your soul is stirred and moved to its very depths. It is a selfish concern, some would say. No; it is a godly concern. It is concern about your own personal and individual state and character in God's sight. It is the urgent, personal question, What must I do? And it must be so always, as often as the Spirit causes you to experience a personal dealing between you and God most high, God most holy. But let such personal dealing, graciously involving forgiveness of sin, issue always in the graciously instinctive cry, Here am I; send me.

The case may be reversed. There is a voice heard, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Thou hearest it, as many hear it. There is work to be done for the Lord. In a stirring time there is a proclamation from heaven, and on earth, for men to offer themselves willingly for service. It comes home to thee. Thou art touched, raised, stimulated;

earnest also and enthusiastic ; thou holdest out thy hand for the badge of enlistment : Here am I. Far be it from me to repress thy desire to be useful in the Lord's cause ; to throw cold water on thy young and glowing ardour of soul. But in faithfulness to thee, as well as to the Lord, I must move the previous question : What of thyself ? thine own individual self ? Hast thou thyself seen the Lord for thyself, and been smitten, and touched, and healed, and revived, and cleansed, and purified ? Is that thine own experience ? now ? ever freshly now ? It would be cruel to encourage thee, if it is not, to be one of the Lord's volunteers. But why may not that be your experience now ? Oh ! let the Spirit make it so now. Go into the secret place of thy God, and have peace.

5. The errand on which thou art to be sent may be sent as to try thee to thy uttermost. Yes ; I may be sent on an errand of judgment ; to preach the Gospel ; but to preach it with the issue of men's hearts being hardened under it. I may be a savour of death unto death to many of the people whom I long to save. This thought made Paul exclaim, " Who is sufficient for these things ? " Ah ! who may say that, who may not also say, " Our sufficiency is of God ? " How may I say that, if I am not always dwelling in his holy place, beholding his glory, and tasting his loving kindness ? From thence I ever come forth, acquiescing in that issue of my mission, whatever may be its sphere, but beseeching all to lay to heart the terrible danger of being blinded by the light and deadened by the life that there is in the gospel which I preach. O my friends ! let this danger be laid to heart by all of us. Let us hear the solemn warning, " To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts."

VI.

FAITH GLORIFYING GOD.

“Strong in faith, giving glory to God.”—ROMANS IV. 20.

THE leading thought here is the connection of God's glory with our faith. And it is a great thought. God is glorified by our believing ; trusting ; taking his word. He is glorified by our faith ; by our simply believing his promise ; for that is no more than giving him credit for sincerity in the overtures of his mercy which he addresses to us, and his invitations to us to be fellow-workers with him. Having that faith, as the gift of God, we glorify him. And being strong in that faith, we glorify him all the more.

To be glorifying to God, therefore, our faith must, I., have a promise on which to rest. II. It must rest on the promise in the right spirit of confidence in the person promising. And, III., it must be strong, or in the way of becoming strong.

I. The faith in question, if it is to give glory to God, must have a promise of God to rest on. The faith of Abraham, like all genuine and trustworthy faith, has respect to a promise on which it may lean. Human faith, not resting on a divine promise, is either folly or fanaticism. Even in the natural world this is true. We walk by faith ; but it is by faith grounded on the promise which all nature, on the part of her great Author, gives ; the promise that nature's laws will operate, and her processes will go on, with the regularity

hitherto observed. Walking by faith in that virtual promise, you walk safely. To be strong in that faith is good ; it is glorifying to God. But if, in your natural walk, you disregard that virtual promise, and rush into danger in spite of its conditions, the stronger your faith, the less is it either reasonable on your part as students of nature's laws, or glorifying to nature's God. Faith must always have a promise, express or implied, to grasp. The promise which Abraham's faith grasps in this instance is certainly one fitted to try his capacity of believing to the uttermost. The only thing that can be said on the side of lessening a difficulty is this—The promise which this faith had to grasp was both precise and definite in itself, and unmistakably pointed and personal in its application. There could be no room for doubt, either as to the exact thing promised, or as to the particular person to whom it was promised.

Ah! but one says, These are unspeakable advantages in the line of Abraham's faith being strong, as compared with mine. Show me a promise of the spiritual good which you wish me to appropriate, as specific in its terms, and as express in its personal application to me, as was the promise of a son by Sarah that Abraham got. I will take no exception to it on the ground of antecedent improbability. I will not scruple or hesitate for a moment. Let it be a very miracle that the promise involves, and a miracle ever so stupendous, I will believe, and need no one to help my unbelief. But you say—No such promise is given as the ground or warrant of faith to you. All that your faith has to lay hold of is quite vague and general ; consisting of indefinite assurances of grace ; most generous, indeed, and free ; but not addressed to you individually, and not pointing out any unequivocal result to be realised as a palpable fact in your experience, such as Isaac's birth in that of Abraham. Let one promise, for the sake of distinct example, be singled out. Let it be the great gospel

promise to which Peter, on the day of Pentecost, referred—"I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . . and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 17, 21, 38, 39.) Let the objection now taken be considered with reference to that. Put in plain terms, it amounts to this : If I were called by name as Abraham was ; if I were told that I was to be saved, as explicitly as Abraham was told that he was to have a son by Sarah ; and if my being saved were a matter as palpably ascertainable as was the birth of Isaac ; then the two cases—Abraham's and mine—would be parallel, and I might be expected to believe as he did.

But consider (1), may not the words which our Lord puts into the mouth of Abraham himself be virtually applicable here ?—"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Is it clear, that if I am not now complying with the gospel call, addressed to all sinners, and to me a sinner, I would comply with it more readily if it were addressed to me by name ? that if I am now neglecting the great salvation, offered in free gift to all, and among the all to me, I would be more disposed to accept it, if it were offered to me by name ? And again, if forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, renewal of nature, peace, holiness, hope,—if these and the like saving benefits are now felt to be so intangible that I cannot get hold of them, would it in any degree obviate the difficulty to have them all materialised, were that possible ; to have them made up into a material packet which my hand may handle, or a material host which my eye may see, or a material wafer which my mouth may swallow ? Let me not deceive

myself. Let me not imagine that if I believe not now, it is the circumstances of my position, or the character of the promise, or the conditions of the faith required, or anything else than my own evil heart of unbelief that is in fault. Called by name, I might, and I would, refuse as now ; for the real reason of my refusal would remain in force then as now ; “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” A calling by name would not make me willing. Assured by name, I might, and I would, decline it as now. What is there in my being so assured by name to make the salvation more welcome, more precious, more indispensable to me, than now ? And as regards the last ground of difficulty, the intangible nature of its blessings, supposing even that I got them embodied in some sensible shape or sign, it would be the embodiment alone that became mine. The blessings embodied would seem as shadowy as ever. Be not deceived. Be sure that the call is personal and pointed enough. Thou, brother, art called, and so am I. The promise is to thee and to me. The salvation is for thee and for me. And it is to be realised experimentally in thee as in me. Let us together taste and see that God is good. Let us not dream of our being more able or more willing somewhere else than here, or some time else than now. Here and now, let us be willing, in the day of the Lord’s power ; willing to be the Lord’s.

Again (2), understand clearly the real ultimate object of faith of Abraham. It had, for its immediate object, the promise of the birth of a son in his old age. But surely when Abraham believed that promise, he did not contemplate the event to which it pointed, barely and baldly in itself. He looked at it in its spiritual significancy ; in its bearing on the fulfilment of the great original promise of man’s redemption, which he had been told was to be fulfilled in his seed. But for that aspect of it, the promise which he now received could really have no meaning to him. There could be no sense in

it. In a worldly point of view, what need has he of this child, for whose birth the very laws of nature are to be suspended? For his own temporal prosperity, for the preservation of his name and memory on the earth in a numerous and powerful posterity, abundant provision has been made already. Why should this new and strange thing be wrought, as if a mere prodigy, a sport of nature, were intended, and nothing more? It cannot, it must not be. So Abraham might have reasoned, according to the flesh. But not so in the Spirit. The promise is to him the promise of salvation. It is not merely that a son is to be born to him, as it were out of due time. In that son, in whom his seed is to be called, he is to behold the Saviour of men, and his own Saviour. In him, he is to see the day of Christ afar off with gladness. The outward event which God's promise indicates, and Abraham's faith accepts, is but the crust or shell. What Abraham, believing, really grasps, is the inner substance or kernel: the promised Saviour, and the promised salvation. For it is not merely as a new interposition of the power of God on his behalf that Abraham expects the birth of Isaac. No; but as the means of the accomplishment of that assurance in Paradise, on which he, in common with all sinners of our fallen race, rests all his hope of being saved—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."

Viewed thus, Abraham's faith really differs in no material respect from that which you are called to exercise. He has no promise on which his faith may lean, in the least degree more special and personal than you have; and what his faith has to lay hold of is the same unseen Saviour, and the same spiritual salvation that you have set before you in the Gospel. When he believes the promise of this supernatural birth of Isaac spiritually apprehended, he does the very same thing which you have to do, when you believe the promise, "Who-soever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved;"

on the very same warrant also, the same, and nothing else, and nothing more. He renounces all confidence in the flesh. He lets Ishmael go, although once he had been fain to look to him for what he needed ; “ Oh ! that Ishmael might live before thee.” So he himself would have chosen to live by sense ; a son, as it were, in hand being better than a son in promise. But he does not so choose now. He submits himself to the righteousness of God. He embraces, in faith, as a sinner, the righteous Saviour yet unborn. He deals, as you have to deal, with an unseen Christ. And, simply relying, as you may rely, on the testimony of God concerning him who is to be his seed in Isaac, he believes, and righteousness is imputed to him. “ Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him : but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification ” (vers. 23, 24, 25).

Hence (3), Abraham’s case becomes now really ours. It is the same faith in which he was strong that you are called to exercise. The promise is the same to you as to him. You and he are in the same position. Or, if there is any difference, the advantage, in point of fact, is with you. Abraham had presented to him, as the immediate object of his faith, an event future and contingent ; conditional upon certain necessary antecedents (vers. 19, 20). You have presented to you, as the immediate object of your faith, an event past and certain ; an accomplished fact (ver. 24).

What he had to believe was the birth of Isaac. What you have to believe is the resurrection of Christ. The miracle with which his faith had to deal was still in prospect, and, as it were, in the clouds, when, against all calculations of probability, he was called upon to admit and act upon it. The miracle with which your faith has to deal is a recorded and well-attested incident in history. It is that miracle which

you have to receive, and to work out to its legitimate, practical, and personal conclusion.

Isaac is to be born ; and in him is to be found the seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent's head : that is Abraham's ground of hope. Christ is risen ; the seed of woman ; having actually bruised the serpent's head : that is yours. These are the two outward and literal matters of fact which Abraham and you have respectively to receive and grasp as the grounds of that inward spiritual confidence and hope which alone is honouring to God. Surely, in this view, your warrant of faith is not less than was that of Abraham. On the whole, is it not true, and clearly true, that you have at least as good reason, and as much cause, to be strong in faith as Abraham had ?

II. This raises the second question : What is the sort of faith which is to be exercised upon the promise ? It must be such as will be glorifying to God. Generally, it is true that to be strong in faith is glorifying to God. It is so, however, when my faith is the result of a directly personal dealing, on my part, with God ; when it is a real personal transaction between him and me. To be glorifying to God at all, my faith, whether weak or strong, must be faith in his veracity ; in his truth and faithfulness ; in his mere and simple word ; in himself. It is to believe what he says, simply because he says it ; because it is he who says it. No other sort of faith, no faith resting on any other ground, can be glorifying to him. I may believe many things concerning God upon evidence which approves itself to my natural reason, my conscience, my heart. I may believe many things revealed by God because they commend themselves to my sense of what is true, and fair, and reasonable, and right. I may construct, or I may embrace, a theology, both natural and revealed, which shall be thoroughly correct and sound in itself, and

therefore, as to the matter of it, in harmony with God's glory ; which yet, so far as I, the author of it, or the receiver of it, am concerned, is not glorifying to God, but the reverse. For it may be a theology in which I deal with him, not as a person, but very much as a thing. God is to me, if not a bare name, yet, at the best, a notion ; an idea ; a conception ; a sort of abstract term in a scientific or algebraic formula. I make out, by a kind of mental manipulation ; by formal logic or reasoning ; his existence and some of his attributes. I prove, demonstratively, that he is ; and that he is so and so ; and must act, and does act, so and so. I elaborate in this way a whole system of law and government, which I can establish in argument, and which I can defy any one to overthrow. There is faith ; strong faith. But is it glorifying to God ? In being thus strong in faith, do I glorify God ?

My faith, if it is to be glorifying to God, must have its root and source and origin in a real and actual personal dealing between him and me. He and I must meet personally, face to face ; as truly as he and Abraham met personally, face to face. We must—let it be said with reverence—we must know one another ; understand one another ; trust one another. No other kind of faith than that can be glorifying, pleasing, honouring, to him who is its object ; be he human or divine. What ! Shall I be contented that a member of my family should go about to satisfy himself by evidence from hearsay, or from circumstances ; by listening to how men outside talk of me ; or by watching and weighing some of my own outside movements, and some even of my recorded utterances and writings ; as to the opinion he should form of my character, and the measure or extent to which he should conform his own conduct to what he can thus gather of my purposes and plans ? Is that a sort of faith which I can feel to be either complimentary or kind ? Does it do me any honour ? Can it yield me any gratification ? Is it not, on the contrary, if

not an insult and offence, a sore and bitter disappointment and mortification to me? For does it not show that I am held to be, not a friend, or father, who may be fondly resorted to, that I may be trusted and consulted; but an enemy who must be watched, in order to be evaded, or, at the best, a suspected stranger, about whom and about whose movements it may be desirable to be informed; not that he may be earnestly sought after, but that he may be decently and safely shunned? I may be to one so regarding me an object of faith; and of strong faith. He may have a strong belief and sense of my existence, and of those attributes and ways of mine that make my existence a fact to which he must somehow contrive to accommodate himself, if he can, or else be miserable. The strength of his faith in me, such as it is, may thus prompt the maddest and most convulsive efforts to come to terms with me. Or it may plunge him in angry despair when these efforts seem to fail. If I were a devil, I might count such faith to be gratifying and glorifying to me. It is in some such sense that, as regards God, the devils themselves believe and tremble.

But the faith which might be acceptable to devils; the faith of which devils are capable; is not the faith which can be glorifying to God. To be strong in such faith as that cannot give glory to God. No.

If I am so to believe, and so to be strong in faith, as to give glory to God; my believing, my strong faith, must proceed upon, it must be the fruit of, my acquainting myself with him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." That, and that alone, is the faith to be strong in which can be glorifying to God. Yes; it must be faith grounded on my knowledge of his name. And the knowledge must be direct, immediate, personal; not my knowing about him; but my knowing himself. Abraham believed God. God spoke to Abraham, and Abraham believed God. God, the living,

personal God, the I AM, speaks to you ; he personally to you personally.

True, there is not in your case a visible divine presence, an audible divine voice. There is interposed between God and you a messenger crying, Thus saith the Lord ; or a book, out of whose varied and miscellaneous contents you have to gather for yourselves, often indirectly, sometimes with difficulty, what the Lord says. Still it is neither with the messenger, nor with the book, that you, in believing, have to do. It is not the trustworthiness of the message ; it is not the authenticity or the inspired and infallible truthfulness of the book, that your faith ultimately grasps. You must indeed satisfy yourselves, on good grounds, that the messenger is trustworthy ; that the book is true. But that is only the preliminary process. When you have arrived at that conclusion, you are still only on the threshold. The messenger, the book, must be allowed to introduce you to God himself. You must be as a little child ; as the child Samuel, saying, “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Then, only then, are you in a position really to believe so as to give glory to God. Then, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God hath perfected praise.

O be sure that this is a capital, a most cardinal, a vital point, as regards the essence of vital godliness, and the place and power of faith in connection with it ! Let me insist upon the point. Let me bring you this day, here and now, face to face with your God.

Let me bring you,—did I say ? Nay, there is One nearer to you, to every one of you, than I, or any messenger, or any book, can ever be.

Why has he who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ? Why is that Holy Spirit who is even now moving in you, sent forth to testify of him ?

What is it that the Son and the Spirit would have you even now to be doing? To be seeing the Father: to be hearing the Father: to know the Father: to believe the Father: to know and believe the love wherewith he loves you. Oh! come, and appear every one of you personally before God. It is not some one telling you something about God, but God himself, that you are to believe, if your believing is to give glory to God. Oh! let there be no mistake, no misgiving here. Let no notion of anybody, or anything whatever being to be believed come in between you and your believing God, and so giving glory to him.

III. But what about being strong in faith? It is not simply believing, but being strong, or being strengthened, in faith, that gives glory to God. Abraham not only believed God, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Now, in considering what it is to be strong in faith, we must bear in mind the Lord's own saying—"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, . . . nothing shall be impossible with you." The woman with an issue of blood, who could but summon courage to touch the hem of the Lord's garment, and when called into his presence, came fearing and trembling, was apparently not strong in faith. And yet her faith did a great thing for her. It availed for her immediate and thorough cure: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." This woman believed God. She believed him who, as God with us, has power on earth to heal all manner of diseases and to forgive sins. She had heard him often say in words, and more emphatically than in words, by deeds, "I will; be thou whole." He was saying it then, for he was going to heal the daughter of Jairus. In those blessed feet bent on that gracious errand, in that face of tenderness and pity, the woman read the words which every sick and weary one might read for himself, for herself, always there, "I will; be thou whole." And she believed him.

She believed that he meant what he said, when to every sufferer who drew near to him, to every sufferer whom he saw, to herself as suffering—ah! how sorely—he said, “I will; be thou whole.” Surely God in his Son was greatly glorified through that trembling woman’s faith. Was she then, after all, this daughter of Abraham, like Abraham himself, strong in faith? Is it being strong in faith to say, as she said within herself, “If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole”? I think it is such faith as that, such a believing of the Lord, such immediate, personal, dealing with the Lord, knowing him for herself, apprehending him for herself; even such trembling faith as hers, bringing her into contact and union with the Almighty and All-loving One, that puts all his power and love in operation on her behalf, and so is really strong.

For let us well observe what the apostle means when he speaks of being strong in faith, so as to give glory to God; strong, in what sort of faith? and strong in it, how? Here the context may guide us. For the strength of this faith, as the preceding and following verses plainly teach, consists: negatively, in not considering what sense may urge against the promise; and positively, in a full persuasion and assurance of the ability of the promiser to make good his word.

Negatively, it is not considering what sense may urge against the promise (vers. 19, 20). If he had considered or regarded these things, Abraham would have been weak in faith.

And yet he might have considered these things, with at least as much reason or excuse as you have for considering such difficulties and objections as you are often apt to find, or tempted to conjure up, when you are asked to believe God.

Certainly, they were formidable obstacles that had to be overcome by a miracle of power upon him, and by what we might well call a miracle of faith within him. Everything in his condition and in his experience, everything that he could see and know and feel, in nature and in himself, was against

his believing. And what had he on the other side for believing? Simply God speaking; God promising. That, however, prevailed. If it had not, he would have been weak in faith. And he might have staggered at the promise of God through unbelief. He might have staggered. The word is well chosen. He might have been divided in judgment; distracted; not able, on the one hand, to ignore, or set at nought, the promise of God; and yet not able, on the other hand, to disregard the obstacles in the way of its fulfilment. The result of such a balance of forces is distraction, staggering; between the promise, not altogether disowned and disbelieved, and the difficulties too much considered. But Abraham was strong in faith. And his being strong in faith consisted, to a large extent, in his not considering the things which stood in the way of what he had to believe.

This is a merely negative element of the strength of faith; not considering; not regarding. And it may seem to be taking low ground, and even unsafe ground, to say that a man is strong in faith, with regard to any result to be achieved, merely because he does not consider the difficulties of the enterprise. But it is not so. For we must distinguish this "not considering" these difficulties from the mere shutting of the eyes to the fact of their existence. I may be so bent upon the attainment of an object of desire as unconsciously to overlook all intervening obstacles, and fondly persuade myself that what I wish must be possible, simply because I wish it. Or I may be so impatient, venturesome, foolhardy, as to be wilfully blind to everything but the gratifying of my heart's desire. To be strong in some such faith as that is not at all uncommon or unnatural. It is the strength or courage of mere blind animal impetuosity, that, with visor down and lance in rest, runs a tilt at all and sundry. Not such was the faith of Abraham. He had full in view the obstacles in the way of the promise. And this was the very strength of his

faith, that, having them full in view, he disregarded them ; he did not consider them. They were of no account with him. And why ? God spoke ; and he believed.

Ah ! these difficulties, questions, objections ; these suggestions and surmises of sense : I am too old, and my wife is too old ; I am too far gone, and she is too far gone ; for conversion, for life, for fruitfulness. How am I ever to get over them ? I must ignore them. I must banish them from my consideration if I am to be strong in faith. And may I not ignore them ? banish them from my consideration ? Am I not warranted to do so ? Nay, is it not weakness to consider them, if I have faith at all ; if I have anything at all of that faith which is really glorifying to God ? Let me grasp and hold fast the thought that I am face to face with my God. Do I really hear him speaking to me ? Is there a real personal communication from him to me ? And is it with such a communication from him to me ; or rather with himself, as thus in communication with me, that I have to do ?

What means, in such circumstances, my staggering, my distraction, my staggering, and being distracted, between what he says or promises, and what may seem, and may really be, most opposed to it, in myself, or in all the world ? The weakness of faith is to be considering your own body now dead, and the deadness of your Sarah's womb. It is that which makes you a staggering believer ; staggering as a believer through unbelief, and soon staggering into unbelief altogether.

Alas ! how is faith weakened and made to stagger by your considering what sense says or suggests against it. In every department, in every walk of the spiritual life, is it not so ?

Am I called, as a poor guilty sinner, to believe in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of all my sins and my peace with God ? God himself is telling me, not of a child to be born, but of the Child actually born ; and not of his birth merely, but of

his wondrous life and death ; and of his rising from the dead, and reigning, and receiving the Spirit to give, to give to me, and coming once again to receive me to himself. God himself is telling me of this Christ, in his gospel, by his Spirit. He is telling me of this Christ as mine, if I will but have him to be mine. Alas ! I give heed to considerations that seem to make all this impossible in my case. I am not worthy enough, or vile enough. I have not repentance enough, or faith enough. I see not how certain difficulties are to be solved, and certain apparent contrarieties, as of my election of grace and my voluntary choice, are to be reconciled. I will not, I cannot, make up my mind absolutely to reject Christ. But I waver and vacillate ; I stagger at the promise through unbelief. I stagger into unbelief. Is this giving glory to God ?

As regards a holy life, this evil is sorely felt ; the evil of my considering what is against it, so as to stagger at the promise of God that should make it mine. Ah ! how am I tempted here to consider my own deadness ; and so to consider it, as to put up with it, and make allowance for it ; as if the quickening of it were scarcely, in any other than a very faint and feeble manner, to be expected or sought ? How staggering is my walk through unbelief. How apt am I to dwell on infirmities and hindrances ; how ready to acquiesce in what I am, as if it were all I might be. Alas ! for this considering of what hinders, to the neglect of what might help my growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. How does it interfere with my giving glory to God !

For others, as well as for myself, my faith is to be exercised. I plead with God for a child, a brother, a friend. I have promises to plead. God himself is encouraging me to plead them. I spread out before God the case of my beloved one ; I would have God to deliver, convert, save him. I know that God would have me to seek his deliverance, conversion,

salvation. Ah ! can it be that here too I am hindered by my considering the suggestions of sense, and giving heed to difficulties and questions respecting his deadness and mine? Am I straitened? Do I stagger? Are my prayers for my soul's darling vacillating, hesitating, halting? Am I dwelling, even when I pray for him, on the improbability and difficulty of his getting the good for which I pray? Is not my weak faith fast staggering into unbelief? Am I not teaching and habituating myself to become reconciled to his loss? and if to his, ah ! why not to my own?

For the seed of Abraham; for him who is the seed of Abraham, and for all that is his; his cause and kingdom; his church and people; the progress of his gospel; the winning of souls to him; for all that, I am commanded to believe God. Alas! for my weakness in this faith. How do I consider the mountains that are in my way! How easily do I come to the conclusion that they are insurmountable; or at least that the surmounting of them is not to be looked for now; or not to any considerable extent; or not by means of such agency of mine! In the work of the Lord I stagger. It is my weakness in the faith becoming unbelief.

For all this staggering, as regards either my own standing in the sight of God, or my progress in holiness, or my pleading for a beloved one, or my interest in the cause and work of the Lord; for all this unsteadfastness of weak faith, ever running into unbelief, the remedy is to be found, at least in part, in the negative way of not considering the difficulties which sense may raise. And it is not unreasonable to ask you to cease from considering them. For you are called to believe God in the matter to which they relate. To bid you disregard them on any other ground would be vain. And accordingly, when such difficulties really distress you; as for instance, especially, when the question of your personal interest in Christ and his salvation is raised; and you are

inclined to give heed to the objections and scruples and questions which your guilty conscience and your doubting heart are sure to suggest ; and to hesitate and hang back until you are satisfied upon every point upon which a scruple may be raised ; I would not meet you with argument. I would carry you at once to God, and desire you to hear and to believe him. I would have you to be no more solicitous as to how you, so great a sinner, can be saved, than Abraham was, as to how he, so old a man, could be a father. I would exhort you to be like him, who, being not weak in faith, considered not his own body now dead ; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb ; and therefore staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.

For now, positively, notice what, as the apostle explains it, being strong in faith really is. It is simply being fully persuaded "that what he had promised he was able also to perform." (ver. 21). Nay, but who doubts that? you ask. I at least never dream of calling in question the omnipotence of God. I perfectly well know, and am firmly convinced, that what he has promised he is able also to perform. And yet I see not how that knowledge and conviction will of itself make me, or any man, strong in faith. Very true, O friend. To believe that God is omnipotent, however strongly, with whatever full persuasion, when that belief is the mere admission of a dogma in theology, a general truth or proposition, proved by reason and affirmed in Scripture : so to believe and be fully persuaded and assured that what God has promised he is able also to perform ; will go but a little way towards strengthening or establishing you in that faith which glorifies God. But let me again remind you that the faith in question is believing God ; not believing something about God, but believing God. It is a personal dealing of God with you, and of you with God. He and you come together ; he to speak, you to hear ; he to promise, you to believe ; you to ask, he to give.

Ah ! in that view it is something, it is much, it is everything, to be fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform : and that, at the very moment when God is dealing with you, and you with God ; and with reference to the very matter about which God is dealing with you, and you with God ; be that matter what it may, pertaining to your own acceptance and peace, or growth in grace and deliverance from evil ; or to the conversion and salvation and well-being of those you love ; or to the advancement of the cause you have at heart. Whatever it may be that comes up, in this real personal dealing of God with you and of you with God ; whatever on his part in the way of admonition, or correction, or discovery, or encouragement, or consolation ; whatever on your part of sin and weakness and want and woe : it is a blessed thing to remember that it is the Almighty who speaks to you ; that it is the Almighty who bids you speak to him ? O ye of little faith, wherefore do you doubt ? Is anything too hard for him who asks you to believe him ? Is anything impossible with him ? When it is with him and with his promises that you are dealing, can you ask or expect anything too great, or too high ?

Oh ! come, my brother, be confronted with thy God, face to face with him. Be alone with thy God ; Jesus bringing thee near to him ; the Spirit moving between thy God and thee. How canst thou then and there, here and now, best honour him and give him glory ? How but by being fully persuaded, and in thy dealings with him proceeding on the full persuasion, that what he promises he is able also to perform ? Remember that it is with none other than the Omnipotent that thou art invited to be at home ; it is in none other than the Omnipotent that thou art called to confide. Take any promise of his within the range of this blessed book. Take it in its highest reach and widest sweep. Plead it for thyself

and thine. Plead it for himself and his. Plead it, in the full persuasion that no difficulties such as sense might consider can stand in the way of its accomplishment ; for what he has promised, what he promises, he is able also to perform. Be strong in this faith, giving glory to God.

For really, after all, it is faith in God's power that most glorifies him ; it is distrust of his power which lies at the root of most of the unbelief that is so dishonouring to him. Especially is this the case sometimes with earnest souls ; souls that would be ashamed of calling in question the willingness of God to meet their case ; but yet somehow harbour the fear of their case being so bad that even God cannot meet it. " If thou canst do anything," we are apt to say, with the afflicted father. Let us ponder the gracious answer, " If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And let us enter into the spirit of the gracious reply, " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

In conclusion, let me beseech you to lay to heart the ground on which the duty of believing, and believing strongly, is here put. It is that it gives glory to God. It is not that it gives peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart, and salvation to the soul ; but that it gives glory to God. To be weak in faith is not merely to miss or mar a privilege, but to commit a sin ; not merely to injure yourselves, but to dishonour the God whom you are bound to glorify. It is an insult and offence to him. To be dwelling on objections, hindrances, difficulties, as mountains standing in the way of his free word of promise ; to be distrusting his ability to sweep them all away, and make his word of promise good ;—can anything be imagined more fitted to affront the Almighty God, the Amen, the faithful, true, and loving Jehovah ? Is it not literally and truly making him a liar ? O friends ! beware of so great a sin. Think not that doubt, hesitancy, uncertainty, whether as regards your own acceptance of his

mercy, or as regards your giving yourselves to his service, and becoming fellow-workers with him for the good of others, can ever be looked upon by him in any other light than as doing him the greatest possible dishonour ; refusing to believe his testimony ; in plain terms, giving him the lie ! You may fancy that there is humility in it ; that your bashfulness and timidity have a certain air of becoming self-abasement. You feel your own unworthiness and unsteadfastness so deeply that you dare not venture to be too confident or to presume ! Presume !—The presumption is all the other way ! The intolerable presumption is to refuse to take God at his word, and believe that he means what he says when he bears this testimony that he giveth you eternal life, and that this life is in his Son ; and when he adds the assurance that his grace is sufficient for you. It is presumption most dishonouring to the Lord, in the face of that assurance, to be considering any thorn in the flesh, however sharp, or doubting that strength of his which is made perfect in weakness. Brethren, be clothed with humility. And that you may be clothed with humility, be not faithless but believing. Be strong in faith, giving glory to God.

VII.

ENDURING AS SEEING THE INVISIBLE ONE.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”—HEBREWS XI. 27.

THIS is said of Moses with reference to the second instance of his faith here celebrated. The first was a very searching trial and signal triumph of faith ; all the more because the event entailed deep disappointment and prolonged delay. Now, after forty years of exile, he has again taken his stand as Israel's champion. Now he finally forsakes Egypt. He stands before Pharaoh for the last time. Till now, there has been room for hope of some adjustment. The tyrant has shown repeated signs of relenting. But now, all that is over. “The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me ; take heed to thyself ; for in that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face no more ” (Exod. x. 27). So Moses endured. He did not abandon his purpose of leading Israel out of Egypt. He did not fear the wrath of the king, whose hosts, as he could not but foresee, might yet pursue the fugitives with all but resistless power, and overwhelm them in ruin before a place of safety could be reached. He endured, as seeing, not Pharaoh but one greater than Pharaoh ; him who is invisible.

I propose to consider, I. what this *quasi-vision*, this seeing,

as it were, in a sense, him who is invisible, really is ; and II. how it helps one who believes to endure. I say one who believes. For it was by faith that Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

I. What, then, is this virtual seeing of him who is invisible? Jesus says of him that loveth him, "I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." How? asks Thomas. "If a man love me, he will keep my words," is the reply. So, while the world sees me no more, ye see me ; the Holy Ghost teaching you all things, and bringing all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you ; all my sayings which you lovingly keep. May not this conversation throw some light upon the inquiry—What is this seeing? Moses seeing, as it were, or feeling as if he saw, him who is invisible? One thing, at all events, is very clear. The object of it is a person, a real and living person. And it is a person who has entered into personal dealing with Moses: a person whom Moses personally knows ; whose personal acquaintance Moses has made. That is a vital point. It has been made matter of doubt how far it is possible for man's finite understanding to take in any clear or distinct conception of Infinite Deity. The doubt may be partly met by an appeal to what reason and conscience teach, as they point inferentially to the wisdom and power of the Creator, and the sovereignty of the Ruler and Judge. But it is when he speaks himself, directly and by word of mouth, verbally and articulately, that he can best be recognised as a real living person, with whom personal ties may be formed, and personal intercourse may be held intelligently. Hence, accordingly, from the beginning, God has spoken. His word came forth ; the Eternal Word which was with God, and was God. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath de-

clared him." He has been declaring him from the first ; for his goings forth have been from of old. He has been going forth as the Word, declaring the Father ; not in dim guesses of reason merely, but in clear, distinct, articulate utterances of revelation. He has been thus, from the beginning, conversing with men. So he conversed with Adam and the first fathers of our race. So he conversed with Noah, and his seed after him. So he conversed with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the patriarchs. So he conversed with Moses. Let me trace some of these successive manifestations or revelations of him whose goings forth have been from of old ; that I may show how personal they all are ; and how they are all verbal ; how it is a person who reveals himself, and that in speech.

It does not appear that this invisible One ever made himself actually visible to our first parents, either before or after the fall. But they heard his voice. They heard it as an external voice ; not a voice in them merely, but a voice to them. Imagine the effect of their so hearing that voice for the first time. They have opened their eyes in Eden, with a glorious scene or panorama all round. Endlessly varied forms of beauty, and of living beauty, are on every side. New colours, new outlines, colours of richest hue, outlines of rarest grace, meet them at every step. An exuberance of animal life and joy bursts on them at every moment. And over and around them is the infinite vault of the sunlit or starlit heaven. Their souls are ravished with a tumultuous sense of vague delight. But it is unreflecting. Or if reflection comes, it causes a grievous want to be felt. There is dead and blank silence, save for nature's dreamy sounds of sighing winds, and the voices of birds and beasts ; and the all but mute converse of their own living and congenial hearts. There is a longing for some living person, to tell them what all this may mean.

Hark ! A new sound breaks on the ear. Speech, of the articulate sort with which they are themselves endowed, is heard. It does not come from either of their mouths ; nor from the mouth of any creature. From without, from above, from beside them, it is unmistakably and unequivocally heard. It is a person speaking to them ; speaking to them personally. They recognise him as a person, speaking to them ; just as distinctly and certainly as they recognise one another as persons, when they speak to one another. And he says : I am the Lord thy God ; thou shalt love me, and keep my commandments. And this is my commandment : “Thou shalt not eat of this tree ; in the day thou eatest thou shalt die.” Is it not to them now as if they personally saw him ? Is it not a virtual seeing of him ? And ever after, as long as they kept their innocency, could they fail to recognise and identify this Person when they heard his voice, some articulate voice of his, as he walked in the garden in the cool of the day ? They did assuredly so recognise and identify him on the day of their fall. They died, as seeing him who is invisible, when the word “cursed” came from divine lips ! Ah ! might they not have endured, as seeing him who is invisible, and so continued to live ?

After the fall, this invisible person continued to speak thus personally to our first parents, and to their descendants. Occasionally, though rarely, he made himself visible ; in human guise ; as if in exceptional anticipation of his actual coming in the flesh. For the most part, however, he simply spoke. How he spoke I do not presume to define ; audibly, or in a whisper ; openly, or in a vision. But that he did speak I believe and am assured. Now I try to put myself in the place of any one of those Old Testament worthies to whom he thus personally spoke ; the child Samuel, for instance. I cannot but think that one thus favoured, even once, must have felt ever after as if he had seen the person speaking to him,

and actually talked with him face to face? He might not venture to make a picture of him, even on the canvas of his own imagination : but I think he would have the impression of having seen him nevertheless. His having heard him speaking, asking and answering questions, carrying on a conversation, as distinctly and indubitably as he ever heard his own brother, or any friend or common acquaintance do ; must have made him feel, especially in any moment of emergency, as if he had really seen before, and were now seeing again, the divine speaker ; present now as then ; speaking now as then ?

Of course, it is but few of those who walk with God who have been thus favoured. They were necessarily few, from the first. The general body of the Lord's people must be content to take what he says at second hand, from the reports of patriarchs and prophets ; or by hereditary tradition ; by psalms and songs ; or ultimately by the surer method of transmission in written documents and printed books. If that is my position, how am I to be as one seeing him who is invisible? Nay, there is really no practical difference here. It is the same exercise of faith in both cases. In both cases alike and equally there is an "*as if*," or "*as it were*;" not literal seeing ; but "*as*" seeing. But the "*as if*," or "*as it were*," is not pure fiction or fancy in either case. A real fact underlies and upholds it. The actual, present personality apprehended and identified through speech, is not ideal, but real. It is so in both cases alike. Samuel hears the Lord speaking to him. He tells Eli what the Lord said. It is the same thing to Eli as if he had heard the Lord speaking to himself ; the same, not merely as regards the substance or matter of the Lord's word ; but as to the impression or apprehension of its being the Lord's word to him ; to him personally and presently ; here and now. To you, Samuel, hearing the Lord speaking to you ; to me, Eli, when

you tell me what the Lord said to you ; to me as truly as to you, the unseen speaker becomes a real and living person. I feel that I personally know him, as I know you whom I talk with about him every day. I seem to know him by sight, as I know you by sight ; when you and I meet and converse together. And both of us equally and alike know him by converse, growing into a sort of sight. It is altogether matter of faith to both of us. It is faith coming by hearing, and growing, I repeat, into a sort of sight.

But the faith which thus comes, and thus grows, is spiritual and supernatural, as is its object. It is of the Holy Ghost. This is an indispensable condition, if I am to have the unseen revealer, the unseen speaker, in living personality before me, beside me, with me ; as friend with friend ; if it is to be as if I were indeed seeing him who is invisible. I might literally hear him, audibly and articulately speaking to me, without his even thus speaking to me having power to give me any such vivid sight of him. The voice in my dreaming ear might melt away. It might be unwelcome, and never reach my heart. It might be a pleasant song, whose echoes soon pass. There must be wrought in me, between him and me, some sympathy ; some good understanding and fellow-feeling about the matter spoken of. There must be established between him and me some personal relation of mutual confidence and amity. There must, in a word, be formed a certain close unity of faith working by love. Then will that *quasi* vision, "*as seeing*," be realised ; that vivid sense and keen grasp of "my Lord and my God," as personally present to my eager gaze, my touch, my embrace, which compensates, and far more than compensates, for my never having set on him my bodily eye. It is the Spirit, giving me the faith which he, who is my Lord and my God, preferred to the conviction of actual sense, and sight, and touch ; when he said to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me thou hast

believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29) ; believed as seeing him who is invisible.

The incarnation, issuing in the resurrection and ascension, facilitates this exercise of faith. It must have done so in the case of those who saw the Lord in the body. They might well feel, and live, ever after, as if still seeing him who had become invisible. But Paul had no such advantage, any more than Moses had. He saw the risen Lord ; but only according to the ancient fashion, in the blaze of the Shechinah glory, and in visions by night. Even that amount of actual seeing you have not. There are, however, considerations which may counterbalance this drawback and disadvantage ; such as these three.

I. Was ever man portrayed so graphically as Jesus is in those wonderful biographies of the four Gospels ; the joint productions of the Holy Ghost and the Evangelists ; divinely inspired, and yet so intensely and livingly human ? His frame and features, what he was like as to his outer man, his gait and carriage, you have no means of guessing. But otherwise, you have him all before you. Lo ! he stands, with outstretched arms, clasping babes to his bosom. Hark ! he speaks a word in season to that weary one, "Thy sins be forgiven thee !" See ! a funeral procession stopped, and a widow's heart made to leap for joy ! Come ! look into that dark chamber ; go to that fresh grave ! Jesus weeps ! Yes ; you follow him as he walks by Galilee's lake and in the cities of Judah. Then, coming on to the cross ; the silence before his judges, the eye looking upon Peter, the tender word from the cross to John and Mary, the prayer for his murderers, the strangely calm converse with the repenting thief, the cry of desertion, the closing sigh of repose ; you see and hear it all ! It is all to you as it was to the very eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses themselves ; as if you, as well as they, had seen it all.

2. You have the full benefit of sharing with them in that better seeing of their Master which they obtained when his own promise was fulfilled, and on his departure the other Comforter came. They themselves impart to you all that they were then taught as to the high and deep meanings, and the manifold bearings on the character and government of God, of that human history, that human experience, which, while they were eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of it, was in many particulars so incomprehensible. It is as illuminated by all the light of the insight which they got after Pentecost into Christ's fulfilment of all righteousness; into his honouring the law by his voluntary and vicarious obedience, and his satisfying the law by his atoning sufferings and death; that you now read, as they wrote them, the sayings and doings of the great Redeemer. He is set forth speaking words of wisdom and grace, doing deeds of mercy and love, before your eyes; he is set forth crucified before your eyes; not merely as he appeared to them when he was with them; but over and above that, as he appeared to them after he was gone; with the new spiritual apprehension to which they then attained of the whole plan and purpose of his ministry, the entire scope and efficacy of his mission, and especially of its awful close. It is as having died and risen again, not now dead, but alive for evermore, that he speaks to you. And you hearing, not his apostles, but through and with them himself, seem to see him who is invisible.

3. For it is not to be overlooked that the same Spirit who taught and moved them to realise the Lord's presence as if they still both heard and saw him, is dwelling and working in you. To you, as to them, he testifies of Christ; taking of what is his and showing it to you. He brings to your remembrance the things which Christ has said, and opens them up to you, and applies them to your case, whatever it may be; so pointedly, so vividly, that you gaze into his face as you say

“Speak, Lord! for thy servant heareth.” Thus he really does what some profane dreamers or deceivers profess to do. They pretend, by their mystic or magic legerdemain of clairvoyance, to establish a relation between you and some departed saint or sinner, in virtue of which it shall be to you as if you saw the man now and talked with him face to face. It is an impious mockery of the office and work of the Holy Ghost. They say, but it is a lie, that the spirit whom they evoke will tell you news of the unseen world; of heaven and of hell, if there be a hell. That is more than the Holy Ghost himself undertakes to do; more than, according to any promise, I can expect him to do, when he reveals Christ to me and in me. He bids me read and ponder the record of Christ which he has inspired. He has nothing more, nothing else, to say. But he brings that record and my experience very closely together, and welds them in one; so that, by means of that record, and using its contents as materials, I have real present converse with Christ now; almost, in a sense, by word of mouth, as those who lived with him had in that olden time. Is not that something like seeing him as he is? Is not the Holy Spirit true and faithful in thus revealing Christ? He loves him too well, and he loves you too well, to interpose between Christ and you. He does not speak of himself. He does not glorify himself. He does not hinder Christ from himself manifesting himself to you. It is his very office and business; it is his joy, to remove every obstacle of carnality and unbelief, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, on your part; just in order that Christ may manifest himself to you, as he does not unto the world; that you may see him, though the world sees him not, that you may be as seeing him who is invisible. He brings Christ and you together, face to face, that you may speak to Christ, and Christ may speak to you, to your heart. Lo! Jesus; very near to you, at your ear, at your elbow; able to speak, now actually speaking, to your

heart! Whatever your mood of mind may be, whatever your trial, whatever your need: look out! look up! as seeing him who is invisible. Catch his eye! Feel his touch! Look! He smiles; or perhaps frowns, and smiles again. Listen! Did ever man speak as this man is speaking to you now? It is no dream. It is a blessed reality. You gaze on his face, you lean on his bosom, you whisper in his ear, as John the beloved did at the supper. You rest and rejoice, as seeing him who is invisible.

II. This joy of the Lord is your strength. Not only at the communion table do you rest, but in the field of toil or of battle you endure, as seeing him who is invisible. So Christ himself, the man Christ Jesus, endured. The secret of his endurance was, that with the eye of faith he always saw the Father. In the utmost depths, under the darkest clouds, he was always as one seeing the unseen Father; seeing him personally present with him; personally well affected towards him, and well pleased in him; even when for our sins he was chastening him sore. "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm xvi. 8). Thus Jesus himself endured, as seeing the Father who is invisible. And now he says to you, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and is therefore in the very same position in which I was when I endured as seeing the unseen Father. For when the Holy Spirit opens the eye of your faith; it is not I alone who will manifest myself to you, but the Father also. What a source of strength! There is a triple rope to hold you fast and firm! The Holy Ghost shows you Christ; Christ shows you the Father! The Holy Ghost strengthens you to endure as seeing the unseen Saviour, even as he strengthened him to endure as seeing the unseen Father! It is in the felt and realised presence of a divine person, unseen in one sense, but

in another virtually and vividly seen, that your strength to endure lies. And he is to be seen by you, not merely as an object of contemplation in a leisure hour; but as, in the time of danger, standing beside you; at your right hand; holding you up; speaking to you; conversing with you; calling you by name, and bidding you be strong and of a good courage.

Moses, in Pharaoh's presence, felt and was sure that he was not alone. There was one at his side whom Pharaoh did not see, and he did not see. So far as appears, he had never seen him, except in symbol, as at the burning bush. He had never seen him, as Abraham and others had seen him, sitting at meat and exchanging customary civilities. But Moses knew this unseen Saviour of Israel by previous personal acquaintance and intercourse, as a man knows his friend. The Lord had spoken to him, mouth to mouth. It was as good as seeing him when he talked with him at the bush. And so Moses knows and recognises the Lord now; as if he saw him now at his right hand. Therefore he is not moved.

The three confessors whom the tyrant cast bound into the burning fiery furnace, heated seven times, endured as seeing him who is invisible. Nebuchadnezzar indeed saw four men, instead of three, loose, in the midst of the fire; the form of the fourth being like the Son of God. His eyes were opened; as the eyes of the servant of Elisha were opened, in answer to his master's prayer, to see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. The prophet himself did not see this great sight; the angel of the Lord thus encamping, with so mighty a host, around him. It was not he, but his servant, who needed that satisfactory assurance by actual, literal sight. The prophet walked by faith, and endured as seeing him who is invisible. So also did the three Jewish youths. It was not they, but their persecutor, who required to have actual, ocular demonstration of the Son of God being present with them. They had known him personally before,

and they knew and recognised him now. They endured as seeing him who is invisible.

The Lord would have you to endure, as seeing him thus by faith, faith coming to be all but sight ; in every aspect of his relation to you.

As your surety, to answer for you, he would have you to see him, though invisible, at your right hand. Thus only you can endure, when you have to stand either before God, or before man.

You have to stand before God. You are confused, ashamed, undone. A sense of sin unnerves you. Old sins, never enough repented of ; new and fresh sins, with all the aggravations of divine teaching and experienced mercy, must rush in upon you. You tremble, and are at the point to sink and die. But endure as seeing him who is invisible. See him near you, close beside you ; sprinkling you with his own blood ; clothing you with his own righteousness ; strengthening you by his own Spirit ; and assuring you that he is here to answer for you in the judgment to the very uttermost.

Standing again before your fellow-men, to testify and plead ; to defend yourself, to commend Christ, to persuade them ; you are disconcerted and embarrassed. How weak are you, and how vacillating ! How slow of speech and full of misgivings ! And then, how entirely are you at their mercy ! If they knew all, if they knew you as well as you know yourself, how might they turn upon you with the taunt, " Physician, heal thyself ! " You feel as if you could not confront or face them. But still endure, as seeing beside you him who is invisible. He knows you better than they can know you ; better than you can know yourself. He knows all. And knowing all, he will not be ashamed of you before the angels, if you are not ashamed of him before men. He is at your right hand. They who might reproach you do not

see him. Pharaoh, who would persecute you, does not see him : but angels see him : and you endure as seeing him who is invisible.

As your Lord and Master, your guide and example, he would have you to endure as seeing him who is invisible. To endure, what? Whatever he may appoint; whatever trial of your faith, or patience, or love; whatever sacrifice of self for God or for man. To endure, how? As seeing him who is invisible; seeing him, though unseen, beside you; for he tells you how he, in your circumstances, would have endured; and how he can and will make you endure, as he would have endured, in the like case, himself. Is it really so? you may ask with a sudden start. Yes, brother! That is what you have to realise by faith. Ah! then, you may well reply; I must needs be up and doing; doing, in speech and action, as he would himself do, were he in my place here and now. He is in my place; beside me in my place, whatever that place is. Well, therefore, may I endure in it as seeing the unseen.

As your sympathising friend and elder brother, he would have you to endure as seeing him who is invisible. He is the same to you as he was to those who saw him in the flesh. He speaks to you as he spoke to Martha. He weeps with you as he wept with Mary. In whatever scene or company you may, he is with you in it. Otherwise, it is no scene or company for you. But if he is with you; if you can realise his being with you; in whatever scene or whatever company; you may be firm and fearless on his behalf; enduring as seeing him who is invisible. It may be that you have a very hard experience to meet; perhaps one of the hardest of human experiences. You may have to endure, whether in joy or sorrow, a certain sense of loneliness; the feeling of a great blank; as if you had none to sympathise with you. But still endure, as seeing

him who is invisible. See him, though unseen, opening your chamber door, coming near your couch, taking you kindly by the hand, mingling his tears with yours ; and yet bidding you endure as he endured : when, in the days of his flesh, he made supplication with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. You are not alone. He is at your right hand ; he, “ whom, having not seen, you love ; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

VIII.

THE SIN OF CAREFULNESS.

“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat ; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens : for they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have storehouse nor barn ; and God feedeth them : how much more are ye better than the fowls ? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit ? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ? Consider the lilies how they grow : they toil not, they spin not ; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith ? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms ; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding ; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching : verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve

them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also : for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."—
LUKE XII. 22-40.

THERE are two forms or fashions, two kinds or modes of worldliness, covetousness and carefulness, against both of which the Lord warns his hearers in this discourse (vers. 13-40). The warning against covetousness is suggested by the incident which gave occasion to the conversation (ver. 13). One of the company, the crowd or promiscuous multitude, solicits his interposition as umpire in a question of property between him and his brother. The Lord declines the office, in somewhat summary if not even sharp terms (ver. 14). Then he gives the company or crowd a lesson on the sin and danger of coveting wealth, or counting upon it ; illustrating the lesson by a parable (vers. 15-21).

But heaping or laying up treasure for oneself, instead of seeking to be rich toward God, is not the only way in which the love of this present world works and manifests itself. Among the wealthy, that may be its common shape ; but with the poor, who are the majority, it must be otherwise. Still it is the same sore evil in either case. For it is the very same spirit which in one state of life prompts the proud boast (ver. 19) that in another moves the anxious question (ver. 22), "What shall I eat ? What shall I put on ?" It is the same concern ; to have some worldly portion in hand, apart from simple trust in God.

In a society into which not many rich are called, it is the latter phase of this fault that may be expected for the most part to prevail. And accordingly, when he proceeds to deal with that, the Lord turns from the general crowd of listeners

to his own immediate followers (ver. 22). It is his disciples he addresses ; and he addresses them as his disciples. His whole reasoning with them is founded, not merely on the fact of their being professedly his disciples, but on the assumption of their being so in reality as well as by profession. So regarding them as his believing people, he urges four arguments against their being guilty of the sin of anxious carefulness or thoughtfulness about their earthly condition ; about worldly things (vers. 23-32). And he gives two tests by which they may try themselves as to their freedom from this sin ; or rather perhaps two practical directions as to the best and most effectual way of securing their freedom from it (vers. 33-36).

I. The Lord's first argument is founded on an appeal to creation (ver. 23). He asks you, his disciples, to consider God simply as your Maker. He is the author of your being ; the source and fountain of your life ; the former of your bodies. Ask yourselves, he says, if he who gave you the life may not be trusted for the food needful to sustain the life he gave ? if he who formed for you the body may not be trusted for the raiment needed for its clothing ?

It is an argument *a fortiori*, from the stronger ; from the greater to the less. It may be put thus:—The life is more than meat ; if therefore God gives the life, much more will he give meat for its support : the body is more than raiment ; if therefore God fashions the body, much more will he provide raiment for its wear. And the argument rises in force in proportion as the greater boon already bestowed transcends any lesser boon required for its preservation or development. In a sense, the argument may be applied to the brutes that perish. Even in their case, the life they receive at first from God is more than the meat they must have afterwards if the life is to be kept. The body which God makes for them,

so wondrously organised outwardly, and so still more wondrously animated from within, is more than the wool or hair, or whatever else in the outer skin protects and warms it. God will not make void his gift of life, even of mere animal life, by withholding that without which it perishes. He will not form a fragile structure of nice adjustment and exquisite sensibility, and neglect to shield it from exposure and from harm.

Of course, the argument may be applied with immensely greater power to man; and to man considered simply as man.

So far life in him that needs meat is like that of the brutes; it is animal. But it is associated in him with intelligence akin to that of God. His body also is like that of any beast; it is material. But it is the minister of the immaterial spirit lodged in it, and it is capable of becoming itself spiritual. Man, therefore, so fearfully and wonderfully made, may surely cherish the expectation that the giver of such life as his will be at some pains to feed it; that the maker of such a body as his will give himself some concern about its being clothed.

But the full force of the Lord's argument is reserved for his own disciples. It is to you, his poor ones, his little ones, that the Lord especially and most emphatically addresses it. Your animal life, about whose support you are so apt to be anxious, is not merely associated with mind, as in the case of created intelligences generally, but is allied now, by redemption, to Divinity itself. The material body about whose covering you take so much thought is destined to be conformed to the Lord's own glorious body at his coming. Surely to you the Lord's brief and pithy question should come home with resistless power: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" You have received at God's hands the higher heavenly life as well as the lower earthly life; and received it at such a cost, through the sacrifice of his Son; and by such a process, the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Can you not then

trust this God for the bread and water you must have to eat and drink during the few years of your sojourn here? You, whose bodies, now bearing the image of the earthly, are soon to bear the image of the heavenly, can you not reckon on fit raiment being provided for the brief fragment of time that must elapse before they shall need no covering but that of the silent tomb, until they are summoned to put on incorruption and immortality?

II. The next appeal of the Lord is to providence; the providence of God over the creatures he has made. And it is twofold (vers. 24-28.)

See what God does for the creatures that can take no thought for themselves (vers. 24, 27, 28). And consider what your taking thought for yourselves can do for you (vers. 25, 26). Most fitly is this last consideration imbedded in the midst, in the very heart, of the other. Between what God does, in his providence, for feeding the fowls of the air, and what he does, in his providence, for the clothing of the grass of the field, the somewhat stern, if not even sarcastic, exposure of your helplessness comes in. And it comes in so as to point out the precise evil or sin that the Lord means to reprove. It is the evil or sin of taking thought. Of that the fowls of the air are incapable; as is also the grass of the field.

Both, however, are capable, as all God's creatures are, of conformity to the conditions of their being and their well-being; and in some sense therefore they are all under an obligation to such conformity. The ravens must, if they would prosper, fly abroad for their food; seek it and bring it home. The lilies even, stationary as they are, if they would grow, must imbibe and rightly improve the kindly juice and moisture of the soil in which they have their root. Both alike must be capable of using the appropriate means of life and growth. The only thing of which they are here said to be incapable is

taking thought. Of course, in your case, your use of means as to food and clothing; your compliance with the laws or conditions of your being and your well-being, must be different from what it can be in theirs. It must be intelligent, and therefore conscientious; involving free choice and responsibility.

But as regards the absence of taking thought, the parallel is conclusive and complete. The argument is irresistible. What can all your taking thought do for you? It may furrow your brow with premature wrinkles. It may whiten your head, while yet young, with the wintry snows of age. It may waste and wither the bloom of opening youth and vigorous strength of manhood. Worse than that, it may blight and kill warm love, and turn the heart that once was tender into flinty rock. But can it lengthen life by a moment; or increase stature by a cubit? Can it work for your good, as regards food and clothing? Diligence in your calling; a wise prudence in the expenditure of the fruit of your diligence, may do much in that way. But will taking thought do anything? Will mere anxiety about your affairs help you at all; or the wretched policy which such anxiety is too apt to prompt? What real good comes of all its shifts and subtle expedients? Would you not consult better for yourselves, even in the worst extremity, by bidding away from you the schemes implied in taking thought, and simply acting according to what is present duty, present law?

Do the ravens and the lilies fare at all the worse for doing so? They take no thought. They do not calculate consequences and balance nice questions of lawfulness or expediency. They simply conform, at every instant, to the present will of God. They do so unconsciously. May not you, as the Lord's disciples, do so, intelligently and believingly; casting all your care on him who careth for you? "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God." Your taking thought

can avail for nothing : but that will avail for you much. For it is immediately added : “and,” in your doing that, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus ;”—peace more satisfying than the raven’s unsought portion ; grace more beautiful than the lily’s unconscious smile.

III. The Lord would have his disciples to abstain from taking thought ; first, because in their case pre-eminently the giver of the life and former of the body may surely be relied on for food and raiment ; and secondly, because the God, who in his providence feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies, must be more solicitous about the welfare of his intelligent and redeemed offspring. Now, thirdly, that gracious relation comes in more expressly (vers. 29, 30). The emphasis here is on the word “*ye*.” It is an emphatic contrast. The argument or appeal here rises to a higher stage. From creation and providence, it passes on to grace. The relation which grace establishes between God’s children and himself comes in. It is that of fatherhood and sonship.

It is admitted, as it would seem, that they who are not God’s children may be expected to take thought ; to seek after all these things. It is only natural that they should ; it is just what might be anticipated in their circumstances.

But you are differently situated. You have a Father in heaven ; God is your Father. And it should be enough for you, in your worst straits, to remember, yes, to call to mind in all emergencies and extremities, that your heavenly Father sees your case ; that he knoweth that you have need of these things.

Were I lying down at night in a bare and empty cabin, with wife and children all but famished around me, and with no scrap anywhere of provision for to-morrow, it would be something, much, everything, to know that a kind and liberal friend, not far off, had been made aware of my case. I might

have no express promise from him as regards my present straits ; no assurance of his seasonable interposition for my relief ; nor any notion of the way in which he might come to help me. Still the thought of his knowing my need would soothe and solace me ; and in the home of my desolate destitution I might lay myself down and sleep in peace. Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Your Father, he who, that he might call you his children, spared not his only-begotten Son, but gave him up to the death that he might redeem you from the position of criminals, himself becoming the criminal in your stead, and might make you, in and with himself, sons as he is Son ; your Father, he who, that you may call him your Father, sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father ; he knoweth that you have need of these things. He knoweth all your need. And he knows it as your Father. Should not that be enough for you ? How unreasonable, how unworthy, how inexcusable, for you to be careful and troubled about these things ; you who have such a Father ; so able, so willing, to charge himself with the burden of them all !

There may be some excuse or apology for the nations of the world taking thought about these things. They who have no Father in heaven, no one whom they can warrantably, or consciously, or believingly, address by that endearing name ; to whom in Christ Jesus they can look up as his Father and their Father, his God and their God ; who have no living, loving apprehension of a fatherly relation and heart in him toward them, or a filial relation and heart in them toward him,—they may take thought. There may be some explanation of their anxiety. Nay, in an emphatic and awful sense, they do well to be anxious. Would that they were a hundred times more anxious than they are. For they too, as well as his own dear children, are absolutely dependent on him ; helplessly dependent ; at his disposal ; in his

hands. They cannot feed or clothe themselves. The earthly good things which they have, which are all the good they have, are not in their keeping. All their solicitude about them, all their care and careful, busy, keen, contriving schemes, cannot secure for them an hour's possession of them. A breath of wind scatters their deep-laden argosies. A sudden crash brings their best speculations to the dust. A swift stroke of disease or trouble lays them prostrate. Care as they may, plan and plot as they may, they cannot, any more than the poorest saint of God, add a cubit to their stature, an hour to their lives, a moment to their proprietorship of the things that they call their own. They are not their own. They hold them at God's pleasure. And by what tenure? on what footing? on what terms? On forbearance merely; in long-suffering patience. No covenant right, no children's title, have they to any one of them, or any substitute or equivalent if all should be swept away, save only the stings of conscience and the arrows of an angry God!

O ye orphans in the great Father's world, ye who, under the full blaze of God's manifested fatherly love, choose to be fatherless still, be anxious! Be careful! Full well you may. This night your souls may be required of you. The things you covet and grasp and enjoy, your sumptuous fare and purple clothing, your worldly pomp and carnal ease, the things you seek after: nay, the veriest rag of your raiment; the tiniest morsel of your food; the briefest moment of night's quiet sleep and day's warm light; all are yours by sufferance merely. You cannot hold them. They pass, they are gone. And where and what are you?

All these things do the nations of this world seek after. But you, ye disciples of Christ, are not thus fatherless. I will not leave you orphans. I will come unto you. Yes, in your deepest poverty, of whatever sort; in your utter beggary and want, I will come unto you. I who have brought you out of hell

and bought you for heaven, will come unto you, to tell you that your Father, my Father and your Father, my God and your God, knoweth what you have need of ; knoweth it to the minutest care that can oppress you ; knoweth it in the view of its being his good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

IV. This is the Lord's crowning argument or appeal (vers. 31, 32.) And it may tell in a twofold way. Viewed as turning on the contrast between Christ's disciples, who have God as their Father, and the nations of the world, it may be put in two lights. It is more natural and, in a sense, excusable for them than for you to seek after and take thought about these things ; for first, on the one hand, they have no Father in heaven,—none whom they recognise and own as such,—on whom to devolve the care of these things ; and secondly, on the other hand, they have really nothing else to care for. But you, casting all your care about seeking after these things on your Father, who knoweth that you have need of them, and what need you have of them, are called to seek the kingdom of God in the simple, implicit belief that all these things shall be added unto you. When they come to harass you, these worldly anxieties ; when they crowd in upon your soul, as if they would overpower and overwhelm it ; you meet them as God's children, not only in that character satisfied to leave them all to your Father, who knows your need, but in that character also seeking his kingdom. Like Nehemiah, you say, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."

"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." So the Son of his love speaks to you, his brethren. That is the consummation of his loving-kindness towards you. He contemplated nothing short of that, when he sent me to make him known to you as Father ; my Father and your Father ; and when he commissioned me to bring you into such

oneness with myself as implies his loving you as he loveth me, and looking on you as joint-heirs with me. It is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom (ver. 32). And if so, what else will he not give you? What else that is needed in order to your obtaining that? He may keep you, as his sons, and in that character heirs of the kingdom which it is his good pleasure to give you, under a cloud for a time. The world may not know you; and you may often be at a loss to know yourselves as sons of God and heirs of his gifted kingdom. But you believe; the Lord helping your unbelief. And that is what your faith, be it more or less, grasps; that, and nothing short of that; its being your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I care not with what degree or measure of personal confidence your faith grasps that. It is that that it grasps, if it grasps Christ at all. And if it grasps that, how should it not grasp all that comes before that? Will your Father, whose good pleasure it is to give to you, as his sons, the kingdom, withhold the morsel of meat and rag of raiment you need for a little while till the time for your entering on your high inheritance comes?

Nay, it is an argument and appeal going far beyond the mere necessities of food and raiment. It comes home to you as spiritual men. It assumes that while others seek after these things, the things that concern their food and raiment, their personal satisfaction, and worldly honour and estate; you have something else to care for. You have a higher aim, and you live for a higher object. You seek after something better than the nations of the world seek after. And you do so in faith; knowing God as your Father; and being sure that, as your Father, he means to give you no paltry boon, no mere measure of partial indulgence and grace; but the kingdom; the whole kingdom; all that belongs to his Son as his King in Sion.

Surely, with such a prospect and in such a position, you

have something else to do than to mind earthly things ; something better to care for than meat and drink and clothing ; something higher to live for than ease or contentment, or wealth or honour. What leisure have you for such anxieties as these ? What room in your hearts for them ? Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. For surely here again the greater includes and implies the less. If the initial or *a priori* presumption, or arguments drawn from creation and providence, warrant confidence in him as not likely to grudge you the means of sustaining the natural life originally bestowed on you : much more is the inference from your filial rank and inheritance, reaching on into eternal ages, conclusive as to your title to rely on God for all that you can need for the eternal life which is his gift in Christ his Son.

Now, let these four arguments against the sin of care, or undue anxiety about worldly concerns, be brought to bear collectively and cumulatively, pointedly and personally, on the conscience and heart of a doubting and distrustful child of God. Let him be recognised as really and truly a child of God, notwithstanding his distrust and doubt. The appeal to him in that character will cover all who would ask to be associated with him in the recognition of it.

Stand forth, therefore, thou child of God. Thou who believest in the only-begotten Son of God for the saving of thy soul and thine eternal blessedness in heaven ; but who still art troubled with uneasy thoughts and restless longings about thy worldly estate and prospects, as regards thyself or thy household. Thou art rebuked on all hands.

Creation rebukes thee. Who breathed into thee that wondrous life of thine, which, shared with the lowest animal pulsation on the one hand, is yet capable of union with the highest divine perfection of being on the other ? Who made for thee that body which is not to rot in earth, like the irre-

coverable remains of the beasts that perish, but is to be fashioned like the glorious body of the risen Saviour? Canst thou not trust him who has breathed into thee such a life, reaching to eternity, for the few loaves and fishes that are needed to sustain it for a day? Canst thou not trust him who has made for thee such a body, destined to such a fashion, for the habiliments that are to cover it till it wants none other than a shroud, while it lies waiting in the grave for glory?

Providence rebukes thee. Apart from the right use of means, and the due observance of all the laws and conditions of thy place and position in your Father's world, what canst thou gain by anxious carefulness and thought? See what he does for the creatures that are incapable of such solicitude. And ask thyself what that can do for thee?

Grace rebukes thee. Thou art not an outcast, forlorn and fatherless, in the wild waste wilderness of a fallen world. That was thy state once; and if it were so still, it might excuse, and even warrant, all the anxiety thou feelest, or canst feel, as to thy good estate now. Nay, if rightly realised, it should move thee to far deeper concern about thy good estate, not now, but for hereafter. But thou art now a child, a son: at home with God as thy Father in thine Elder Brother, his Son Jesus Christ. Wilt thou not trust thy Father in heaven; thy Father thus calling thee to be his son; for food and clothing? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for thee, how shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?"

Glory rebukes thee. Thou hast something else to seek, beside and beyond the earthly cares that are so apt to trouble thee. The kingdom of God should be occupying thy thoughts. In itself, and on its own account, it is worthy of thy whole soul being absorbed in seeking it. To be an instrument or agent in advancing it, is for thee the highest earthly privilege; to be partaker of its eternal

blessedness is the heavenly reward and crown. Seeking that, it may well be expected that thou shouldst subordinate to its claims and anxieties all claims and anxieties of a meaner sort. All the rather, because he who calls thee to do so gives thee the kingdom. That is secure to thee by his sovereign gift. It is his good pleasure to give thee the kingdom. Can it be otherwise than his good pleasure to give thee all that thou canst need till thou reachest thy glorious home in heaven? Does not the greater gift include all the lesser? He gives thee the kingdom now. It is his good pleasure, as thy Father, to give it to thee in measure and in foretaste now; not as meat and drink, but as righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. What he gives thee already of the kingdom, in thy sense and experience of thine adoption as a son, receiving the Spirit of his Son in thy heart, crying, Abba, Father, is surely enough to warrant reliance on him for all that the neediest son can ask of the most loving father. And viewed as the earnest of the full possession of the kingdom, it may well give force to the appeal, as addressed to the feeblest and most faint-hearted—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The Lord adds to these arguments against carefulness, two tests or practical directions.

The first test is liberality; or a willingness to part with your substance; be it money, or time, or influence, or ability of whatever sort; to part with it as a sacrifice, a sale; "Sell that ye have;" to part with it freely, and without hope of its being replaced, as alms; "Give alms" (vers. 33, 34). These two conditions are here implied. Selling is sacrifice, or self-denial. Giving alms is bounty, mere gratuitous donation, irrespective of any prospect of return of any sort; whether in kind, or in gratitude, or in fame. To be a fair criterion of your being careful for nothing, but casting all your care on

your Father in heaven ; your beneficence, or your readiness to give, must be a selling of what you have, which is self-sacrifice ; and it must be mere alms ; giving with no view to any requital. It must be such as to show that you really can and do trust your Father in heaven ; and that, relying on him, you are prepared, at the call of charity, to consider more your present duty than your ultimate security from want ; and to do so with a disinterested aim, not looking for any present recompense, but acting on the principle, “Freely ye have received, freely give.” “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

And not merely as a test or criterion of a right state of mind as regards your earthly possessions and powers, of whatever sort, is this manner of giving the one and using the other to be enforced ; but as pointing, in the way of a directory, to the best method for developing and stimulating the grace in question. Let it be in active exercise. Let it have full scope and swing. Let there be real selling and giving alms ; not the pretence and name ; as when I cast in what I call my mite into the treasury of a good cause, when it costs me nothing, and does not throw me in the least more than I felt before on the providence of God ; or when I may indeed sacrifice some personal good, or what I regard as such, but either with a grudge, or with a reserved expectation of some acknowledgment. Let there be real selling and giving alms. That will at once prove and perfect the habit of “taking no thought,” but trusting him who is our Maker, Preserver, Father.

But this first test, even as thus explained and applied, is imperfect, and apt to be fallacious, unless it is qualified or supplemented by the second. For it may be the result merely of a natural disposition, the gratification of a natural impulse ; the impulse of constitutional good nature or reckless prodigality. If it is to be really genuine, springing out of

genuine trust in God, founded on your knowledge of him as your maker and preserver ; your Father, whose good pleasure it is to give you the kingdom ; if its motive is to be your being wholly occupied in seeking the kingdom of God, and having therefore neither taste nor time for earthly cares ; then it must stand the test to which the Lord puts it when he says, " Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding ; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching : verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (vers. 35-37). There must be longing, waiting, watching, working, for the Lord's coming. For this good habit, this heavenly grace, of " taking no thought" is no mere dreamy, listless attitude of apathetic contentment, no epicurean slumber, no selfish sloth, taking its sordid ease, and letting the world wag as it may. No ; it is active service, busy zeal, earnest working, with eager eye and laborious hand, loins girt, lamps burning, all alive and alert on the look-out for the Lord's return. The Lord cares for you, that you may care for him. He relieves you of the charge of anxious thought about your own temporal welfare, that you may undertake the charge of anxious thought about his heavenly and eternal kingdom. His word to you is not merely, " Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind ;" but " Go, work in my vineyard." " Be up and doing." " Occupy till I come." " And behold I come quickly."

IX.

THOROUGH-GOING CHRISTIANITY.

“And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers ; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land ; ye shall throw down their altars : but ye have not obeyed my voice : why have ye done this ? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you ; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim : and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.”—
JUDGES II. 1-5.

THE sin of Israel, here reprov'd, consisted in their not thoroughly driving out the inhabitants of the land, and throwing down all their altars. We do not now inquire particularly into the reason and equity, either of the Lord's stern decree against the nations that had occupied Canaan, or of the manner in which it pleased him to execute his decree through the agency of his own chosen and redeemed people. In regard to the first of these points, there are some considerations that ought ever to be kept in view. In the original division of the earth and its allotment among the tribes of men (Gen. x. 25) this portion of the globe was reserved for the future Israel (Deut. xxxii. 8), and the reservation was most probably intimated to all and sundry at the time, that they might make their arrangements accordingly.

Again, when Abraham was called to be a pilgrim in the land, God gave him many testimonies, before all its princes and their subjects, of his being the rightful heir and lord ; as in the exploit he was enabled to achieve against the five kings, and other manifest proofs of the Lord being with him ; while in Isaac and after him in Jacob (whose burial in Canaan must have signally brought this under the notice of all the people of the land), and specially in Joseph's high promotion in Egypt, the indications of the Divine purpose to make that family owners of the land might have become more and more conspicuous and clear to all observers of the ways of God. Further, the long-suffering of God waited for them many ages, during which he postponed the accomplishment of his promise to faithful Abraham (Gen. xv. 16) : nor was it till the iniquity of the Amorites was full, that his posterity again appeared upon the field, and, on account of their manifold abominations, the land vomited out its inhabitants.

Then, as to the second point, the employment by God of his own people as his instruments in this his strange work of judgment, let the sovereignty of God be adored ; even his absolute right to use what means he pleases, and set men to what work, or task, or trial, he sees fit. And further, let it be considered what the effect might have been ; had Israel executed these measures of severity more decidedly in God's name, and less in their own, than they actually did ; with more of loyal faith in him whose mere instruments they were, and less of the admixture of their own policy and their own passions ;—more, in short, as acting for God, and less, or rather not at all, as acting for themselves. In that case, the work of destruction might have been at first even more thorough. But calm and pure, free from excess of lust or selfish fury, it would have borne the stamp and impress, not of the wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God, but of the severe and solemn majesty of the wrath of

God himself. And who knows how soon such a war, so carried on, under divine sanction, and in a divine spirit, might have led to a very different result from that which was actually realised, through the removal of some into other lands, and the admission of others to the faith and friendship of the happy people whose God the Lord was ?

There might have been believing Rahabs in other cities besides Jericho. And many might have been brought in faith to act the part of the man of Luz, who, in the midst of his city's carnage, was saved, being let go with all his house (chap. i. 22-26).

But the chief reason for the sweeping doom denounced against the idolatrous nations, their idols and their idolatries, had respect to the people of God themselves. And accordingly, it is with reference to its disastrous effects on their own character and history that their sin in this matter is here so solemnly and touchingly reproved. They failed to fulfil the purposes and commandments of God.

God, by the hand of Moses, had brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness ; and by the hand of Joshua he had given them entrance into Canaan, and such a series and succession of victories there as left nothing to be done but to gather up the fruits. Nothing remained after his decease, but that the several tribes, in their several allotted portions, should prosecute the advantage bequeathed to them, and, in the strength of God, do summary work on the scarce resisting remnant of the nations.

But far different was their actual conduct. The picture here presented to us is that of the people of God, stopping short in their career of triumph, not following up and following out the great salvation which the Lord has wrought. They thus incur his stern rebuke and questioning. "I said I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land ; ye

shall throw down their altars : but ye have not obeyed my voice : why have ye done this ? ” (ver. 2).

“ Why have ye done this ? ” Many reasons, more or less plausible, might be given. They were weary of the wilderness and of war ; they had had enough of wandering and fighting ; they longed for quiet rest and peace. Motives also of seeming pity and prudence might sway them : how hard to cut off with so fell a swoop, and in one wholesale sacrifice, so many hosts and households, of whom some at least might yet be reclaimed to Jehovah’s service, or made useful, in some way, to his people. Then, as these relentings of tenderness, or considerations of expediency, occasioned hesitation and delay, their enemies recovered courage, and became formidable again. They lost the time and the tide. Instead of rushing on in full career, with all the prestige of Joshua’s fame, against the helpless consternation of defeated foes ; they had to face, themselves by a natural reaction dispirited and listless, armies now sharp and shrewd enough to discover that the heaven-aided invaders of the soil might yet prove to be but men. No wonder if, under some such influences as these, proposals of truce and compromise began to be welcome to Israel ; and the wisdom of God gave way before the policy of man. It was a policy, however, alike unwarrantable and disastrous ; unwarrantable, considering all that God had done for them, and the assurance they had that he would not break his covenant with them (ver. 1) ; and disastrous in the issue, for the error was irretrievable. Never afterwards could they be in such favourable circumstances for dealing with the nations, their idols and their altars. Nor could the solemn knell ever cease to ring in their ears, “ Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you ; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you ” (ver. 3).

Look at I. the sin ; II. its unexcusableness ; III. its danger.

I. As to the sin. Let me speak to the young Christian, the recent convert,—or to any of you who have recently experienced any spiritual awakening or revival so marked as to form an era in your soul's history, and give you, as it were, a fresh start in the divine life. What now have you more urgent on hand than to make good your position and reap the full fruit of the deliverance wrought out for you? Now is the time for decision. Many circumstances are favourable. Your feelings are fresh; you are in the ardour of your first love; being forgiven much, you love much. You have had, perhaps, a dark struggle with the doubts and fears of unbelief. But you have been enabled to see your warrant for embracing Christ as yours; and in embracing him you have found rest and peace. Then, may it not be assumed that your sense of sin is keen, your apprehension of the beauty of holiness bright and clear, your conscience sensitive, your affections warm? And, besides all this, it is such a crisis and turning-point in your history as demands, and will be allowed by every one to demand, a total change in the whole course and current of your lives. You are by all means bound, and you will on all hands be expected, to come forth from the scene and season of your calling, or your revival, with a thoroughly altered character, and to pursue henceforth a walk altogether different from what was your walk before. Surely it is the very time for your making thorough work of your personal Christianity. It is the time for dealing a deadly blow to all the enemies of your holiness or your peace. What better opportunity for carrying fully out the sternest injunctions of your Lord regarding them?

How does he bid you treat these enemies? Mortify your members that are on the earth. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Sell that thou hast, and seek treasure

in heaven. Love not the world, nor the things of world. Come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Be holy; be sober; let your moderation be known unto all men. Confess Christ before men. Speak of your testimonies before kings. Abound in every good work. Be zealous. Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Teach transgressors the ways of God, that sinners may be converted unto him. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

I do not now stay to explain these and other similar scriptural rules respecting the way in which indwelling corruption, with its tendencies, should be dealt with; the entire separation from the world which, in the way alike of precaution and of protest, a believer should maintain; the open testimony he should be ready on all occasions to bear; and the busy and earnest endeavours to do good that should ever occupy his time. Far less can I undertake to solve the subtle practical questions as to the lawful and the expedient that hover beside the doubtful borders of these departments of duty. Much must be trusted to a single eye and a conscience quickened by the Spirit and enlightened by the Word of God.

But are you really, we ask, going as far, in all these lines of holy living, as conscience and a single eye would prompt? Take, for instance, any one single sin or sinful tendency; what is your treatment of it in the hour of your spiritual deliverance? The lust,—of whatever nature;—whether pride, profligacy, or passion, whether an unruly temper or a disordered imagination, or perverted affections and desires, whatever form of inward corruption, carnality, enmity against God and his holy spiritual law, is the most obstinate in resisting the new aspirations of your regeneration;—the law, in short, in your

members warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members ; —How do you deal with it ? You can well recollect what trouble that evil thing gave you, as you darkly struggled through the depths of spiritual conviction into the light and liberty and love of the glorious gospel of the free, gratuitous grace of God ; what endless difficulties it put in the way of your simply closing with offered mercy, and accepting offered grace ; and how long it was ere you were persuaded to cast yourself, in spite of it, or rather by reason of it, just as you were, on the all-sufficiency of him whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

So far well. But how, when you have attained to enlargement and peace ; perceiving that no amount of sin in you, nor any feeling of it, ought to hinder your coming to Christ, or can hinder his gracious reception of you, how do you now deal with the special evil that had vexed you ? Do you at once, promptly and decidedly, do summary execution upon it, as upon an enemy to whom no quarter could be given ? Do you nail it to the cross in which you find rest ? Do you bring to bear upon it the resolution that would cut off a right hand or pluck out a right eye ? Or are you tempted to treat it after a milder fashion ? Is the charm of your new repose, in the sweet sense of reconciliation to your God, too seductive ? Are you in haste to lay down your armour, and passively enjoy the quiet of conscious peace with him ? Ah ! then, a sort of tenderness of feeling towards the offending part of you begins to steal into your minds. The dream of gaining time and reforming it more gradually soothes you. Until, step by step, its presence ceasing to be felt by you as incompatible with much of a spiritual frame, you are led to tolerate it as an infirmity. Alas ! alas ! you may discover too late that you have lost a most precious opportunity when you fail to signalise the high day of your

interest in the sacrifice of Christ, by the unsparing sacrifice on your part of the old man and all his lusts.

Or take another instance. Such a season as I am speaking of is the very season for remodelling your whole plan of life,—its pursuits, its habits, its companionship. You come out, O believer, from the secret place of your God, where he has been speaking peace to you,—you come out into the world, a new man; and now, when all is fresh, and before you have committed yourself, now is the very time for arranging methodically your general course of conduct and all its details. Let but a few weeks or even days elapse, and it may be too late. You get entangled and compromised. How are you to meet with your former associates? On what terms and with what degree of intimacy? What is to be your position towards them, their plans and their pleasures? What will be the position safest for yourselves and most faithful to them? Again, When and how are you to join yourselves to the company commonly called godly, cast in your lot with them, and avow yourselves partakers of their toils, their trials, and their joys? What, moreover, are to be your rules for the exercise of private devotion and the cultivation of personal piety? What your appointed seasons of seclusion, with which nothing is to be suffered to interfere? What the means and methods of your self-discipline? What the system of your studious preparation for heaven?

These, and such as these, are practical questions, which, if grappled with in time and with enough of manly vigour, may be so settled as to make all your onward path comparatively one of plainness, pleasantness, and peace. You may take your ground, unfurl your standard, and announce your watchword, so unequivocally that few ever after will think of trying to shake or to disconcert you. But alas! too generally, as to all these matters, you have no definite plan of life at all. Some vague ideas of what may be best you have floating loosely on

the surface of your thoughts ; but you have determined nothing ; you have made up your minds to nothing. And so you go forth, and are at sea with neither chart nor plan of voyage, trusting much to impulse, and leaving much to circumstances. Hence vacillation, fitfulness, inconsistency, excess and deficiency, by turns. The opportunity of setting up a high standard and a high aim is lost ; and soon, amid the snares of worldly conformity and the awkwardness of the false shame that will not let you retrace your steps, you deeply sigh for the day of your visitation, when you might have started from a higher platform, and run a higher race, than you can now hope ever to realise.

II. The inexcusableness of the sin in question may appear from what has been already said, so that a few brief remarks here may suffice. Hear the remonstrance which God addresses to Israel (ver. 1), and consider his threefold appeal. Look back to the past, and call to mind from what a state the Lord has rescued you, at what a price, by what a work of power. Look around on your present circumstances ; see how the Lord has performed all that he swore to your fathers ; the land is yours ; and it is a goodly land. And if, in looking forward to the future, you have any misgivings, has he not said, I will never break my covenant with you ? What can you ask more ? A past redemption, a present possession, and, for the future, a covenant never to be broken. Are these considerations not sufficient to bind you to the whole work and warfare of the high calling of God, and to make cowardice and compromise exceeding sinful ?

Oh ! if there be any here, who are still in the first fresh morning of their Christian life, their hearts yet warm, and their bosoms yet young ; or if there be any who, at some communion season or under some providential visitation, may have been reawakened, through new acts of repentance and

faith, to their first love from which they had been beginning to fall away ; we beseech you to make full proof of these gracious dealings of God with your souls. Where were you but yesterday ? Sinking in the horrible pit and the miry clay. Where are you to-day ? With your feet set on a rock, and a new song put into your mouth. And will you now hesitate and hang back, when God bids you press on to complete victory and triumph ; now that you have his own infallible assurance, “ I will never leave you nor forsake you ” ? Let your resolutions and endeavours, your vows, and prayers, and efforts, your fidelity in ceasing to do evil, your zeal in learning to do well, bear some worthy proportion to what God has done, is doing, and will yet do, for you. We summon you to decision, thorough, out-and-out, resolute decision. We call upon you to form for yourselves, or rather to take from God’s word, a lofty and pure ideal of what practical Christianity is. No truce, no league, no terms of amity, with the world, its maxims or its men. No acquiescence in a mere pittance and fragment of the portion God has in store for you.

What ! will you, on the very first apprehension of your escape from wrath and your admission to favour, be in haste to take your ease, and suffer God’s enemies and your own to take their ease too ?

Sweet indeed is the sense of sin freely pardoned through the blood of an adequate and all-sufficient atonement ; precious the first glimpse of his reconciled countenance, beaming upon you who are in Christ, with the very same holy complacency with which it ever beams upon him. But thou shalt see greater things than these as child of God and soldier of the cross. Up then. Rest not, be not satisfied, while one inch of the whole breadth of Christian perfection is unreached ; while one single element of opposition to God’s will lurks within you.

Aim high, we repeat ; resolve bravely ; be decided. God will never break his covenant with you ; break ye not your covenant with him. And be sure of one thing, that a whole is after all far easier, as well as far happier, than a half Christianity. The hardest of all bondage is to serve two masters. The most hopeless of all tasks is to work out a fragmentary salvation. But be working out your whole salvation, with that scrupulous, sensitive, conscientious fear and trembling which is inspired by the sense of God working in you to will and to do of his good pleasure ; go forth at once, manfully, honourably, as not almost but altogether Christians ; have done at once and for ever with all half measures ; be wholly on the Lord's side ; follow the Lord fully. Then will all the wretched entanglements of a divided choice and doubtful mind be broken as nets from your feet. No more embarrassment ; no more hesitancy ; no more hanging of the head in presence of those to whom, by your facile or faithless compliances, you have given an advantage over you. Your trumpet will no more give an uncertain sound. Your testimony will no more falter. Men will take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and that he is ever with you ; and as you run, and are not weary, as you walk, and do not faint ; your path will be as "the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

III. One word, in closing, as to the dangerous and disastrous consequences of the sin in question. Hear the awful sentence of God, "I will not drive them out from before you ; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you" (ver. 3) ; and then see how the children of Israel lift up their voice and weep (ver. 4). Well is the place named Bochim : it is indeed a melting scene. The golden opportunity is lost ; their error is not to be retrieved ; its bitter fruits are to be reaped from henceforth many days.

A sad sight truly ; but sadder, if possible, is the spectacle of a Christian professor suffering, in after years, from the insufficiency of his first works and the first foundation of his Christianity ; from his having allowed some evil thing in his bosom, some Achan in his camp ; from his having stopped short when he should have gone on unto perfection.

At the time, the shortcoming, the compromise, the unsteadfastness and indecision, may be so small and trifling, the plague-spot may be so faint, as scarcely to be noticeable at all amid much that is promising and fair. But wait a little. By and by, the romance, as it were, of the Christian life is over, and its real history begins. The every-day duties and trials of the Gospel come, in which you have need, not of excitement, but of patience, that after having done the will of God, you may inherit the promises.

And here, how soon may you have cause to cry out with bitter weeping, " Would that I had started fairer for the race ! would that I had pitched my song at a higher note, and made my footing surer on the rock of my salvation ! would that I had set out with a holier standard and a more heavenly aim ! that my walk with God had from the first been closer ; my communion with him more unbroken and more joyous ; my separation from the world, and the rooting out of sin, indwelling sin, more thorough and unsparing ! Ah ! I see now what steps I might then have taken for following up and following out the good work begun ; with what ease, comparatively, I might, by God's blessing, have mastered this or that besetting lust, and bid a brief and final adieu to this or that instance of vain worldly conformity. But woe is me for the hard inheritance that now falls to me from my early weakness and guile ! The root of bitterness that, instead of digging clean out of the soil, I was satisfied with cutting down and decently covering over, springs up to trouble me ; my half-tolerated indulgence of the flesh becomes a thorn in the flesh ;

Satan makes it his messenger to buffet me ; for he can well avail himself of all my slips and stumblings ; the terms on which I have consented to be with the world can scarcely now be interfered with ; and altogether, I find myself fondly sighing for the lost day of my espousals, when I might have learned lessons of holy love hardly to be acquired now, and rid myself of drawbacks and encumbrances which now—shall I ever shake off ?”

Need we remind you of the thousands and ten thousands in the professing Christian world to whom such experience as this is absolutely fatal ? They did run well. Once they had many movements, many relentings, much even of gladness in hearing the gospel message. They made a fair show ; they seemed to bear fruit ; they were much in earnest, so far as they went ; they were lively, active, enthusiastic. But they would not go in to possess the whole land. They would not slay every foe. And soon they have made shipwreck of their faith ; they have returned again to the world and the world’s folly ; they have drawn back unto perdition.

Ay, and even if God should not suffer you thus altogether to be cast away, oh ! consider what it is to be saved indeed, yet so as by fire ; to have a burning in and about you of much structure of wood, hay, stubble, scarcely leaving the bare foundation for you to stand on at the last. Think what sharp dealings on the part of God, in very fatherly love to your souls, your uncertain dealings with him and his commandments render necessary ;—what chastenings and stripes ; what hidings of his countenance ; what visitations of his displeasure ; what seasons of dark depression and gloomy fear ! And, on your part, how is your peace marred, your joy broken, your usefulness impaired, by the miserable fruits of your half measures and partial counsel in God’s cause ? Brethren, let there be an end of guile. Let your bearing, as freely justified by grace and sanctified wholly by the Spirit, be erect, upright

open. Go ye forth in the Lord's name to do all his pleasure ; so shall ye in the end save your own souls, and save, too, under God, the souls of not a few who, smitten with admiration of the image which, however feebly, you yet reflect, not broken, but entire, may glorify God in the day of their visitation.

We press, then, a thorough-going decision in Christianity

1. On you who are starting for the first time, or starting anew and afresh after some blessed season of revival, *first*, for your own sakes, that you may not treasure up for yourselves future disappointments, falls, backslidings, chastisements, if not even utter apostasy and ruin ; *secondly*, for the glory of God and good of souls ; that you may commend the doctrine, that you may be free from such inconsistencies as might prove stumbling-blocks and offences to inquirers ; that you may win souls to Christ. True kindness to the world is faithful separation from it. Live not as if you thought, or would encourage them to think, that the distinction between your state and theirs is small. Live, and show you live, as believing that the world lieth in wickedness, and that grace alone, the grace you have received, can save others. Live as able to say, "I would to God that all ye were not almost, but altogether, such as I am."

2. On you who are mourning over lost opportunities in time past. Let not your grief expend itself in mere idle weeping. Seek forgiveness anew by sacrifice. So did the Israelites ; so may you. You may thus be again restored, and if not put in possession of all the advantage you once might have had for a godly life, you may yet be greatly quickened. Repent, do your first works, and your first love may be kindled again. Have recourse to sacrifice ; cleave to Christ ; look on him whom you have pierced ; look on him as pierced for you ; and learn now to hate with a perfect hatred all that is hateful to him, and offer the prayer : "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

3. On you who are yet strangers to the power and practice of the Gospel. We entreat you to understand what sort of Christianity we urge on you ; not such as you see in too many professors,—joyless, lifeless, vague, doubtful, undefined. We press a whole Christ and a whole Christianity. It is no half salvation God offers to you. There are no half measures with him ; all full, free, unconditional, unreserved. Taste and see. Come ! be wholly the Lord's. Make fair trial ; not half, but whole-heartedly. “ Choose you this day whom ye will serve.”

X.

THE OATH OF GOD.

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”—HEBREWS VI. 18.

THE divine oath is one of the mysteries of revelation. To one duly considering the majesty of God, and his relation to his creatures, nothing can be well more awful than his swearing to us, and swearing by himself. The form of the oath is given frequently elsewhere in Scripture: “As I live, saith the Lord” (Num. xiv. 21). But this is the only place where the principle or rationale of it is explained.

The explanation may be considered, first, in its own gracious nature: What is it? and, secondly, in its application: What is its manifold use?

I. The meaning of the divine oath and its graciousness fall to be considered.

1. The divine oath is represented as analogous to an oath among men, and yet different from it. The design in both is the same; it is for confirmation, whether of a fact or of a promise; and so for the ending of all strife, debate, and doubt (vers. 16, 17). There is a difference, however, between the two oaths, arising out of the difference between the parties swearing. Men swear by the greater (ver. 16). But this God cannot do; and therefore he swears by himself (ver. 17). Still the appeal in both cases is virtually the same. When

I swear, I call in as a witness to the transaction to which my oath relates a Being above myself, on whom I am dependent, and to whom I am responsible. My oath is a virtual challenge to him to come forward and guarantee my truth. Hence the security of the oath is practically variable. If I swear by one whom I despise or distrust, the oath is a farce. If I fear him, while you do not, the oath is valuable to you, simply as it tells upon me. If both of us acknowledge the Being invoked, the assurance becomes the strongest that can be given.

But what of the divine oath? What are the two immutable things which the oath of God, swearing by himself, brings upon the field? Some say, the word and the oath; others again, two oaths; the one being God's oath to Abraham (ver. 14); and the other, the oath excluding the unbelieving Israelites from Canaan (ch. iii.); or else the oath consecrating Christ to be High-priest (ch. vii.) Both explanations are unsatisfactory. Evidently the apostle means to show how the solemnity of the divine oath adds weight to the simple divine word or promise. But it is a poor way of doing so to tell us that the word or promise, and the oath, are two separate things; in that view, two promises without the oath would do equally well. And it is a still poorer expedient to substitute two separate immutable oaths for the two immutable things that give to every divine oath its force and sanctity. What can they be but the divine word and the divine name or nature?

Take first the divine word. That is an immutable thing. The word or promise of God is always sure and trustworthy. Even when the matter to which it refers is in itself indifferent; still, his word once spoken,—his promise once made,—is unchangeable, and fixes the event, under the conditions of the word, or the promise, express or implied, as certainly as if it were already and irrevocably past.

But take in now the second of the two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie ; his name, his character, his nature, his being and continuing to be such as he is. What new security is thus given ? Is it not in substance this :—That God discovers to us a ground or reason of what he designs to do farther back than the mere sovereign and discretionary *fiat* of his absolute will ; deeply fixed and rooted in the very essence of his being ? Is it not that he puts the certainty of that to which he swears, not only on the ground of his having intimated it beforehand, but on the ground of a stronger necessity, in the very nature of things, and in his own nature ; lying far back and far down, in his being God, and being the God he is ? The thing is to be so, not merely because God has said it shall be so, but also because it cannot but be so, God continuing to be, and to be the God he is. This is what, in swearing by himself, he means to tell us.

It is an amazing thought ! That God, not content with giving to you, to all of you who will but do him the justice of believing him, his sure word of promise, assuring to you eternal life, should open to you the very inmost secret of his nature, and its unchangeableness ; and should bid you see your salvation bound up indissolubly with his own immutable and everlasting glory ; surely that is a great thought. It is not merely that you may be saved, on certain terms to be fulfilled by you. But, believing in his Son now, you are on such a footing with him, in virtue of his free and gracious dealing with you as one with his Son, that you cannot but be saved, because God lives, and is the God he is ! It amounts to this, that your perishing is represented as alike and equally impossible with God's ceasing to be, or to be what he is. Your eternal welfare and God's essential immutability are inseparably welded together ; blended ; married ; so as to be no more twain but one. It is indeed, I repeat, an amazing thought ! Well may it be spoken of as an act of superabounding grace

and condescension on the part of God ; this swearing by himself. So accordingly it is represented to be.

2. The graciousness of the oath is as wonderful as its meaning. It is indeed more so. Even among men ; if the heart is true, and the eye, even turned on empty space, beams keen with honour ; there is a certain feeling of repugnance to being called to swear. And undoubtedly no one who possesses right feeling, as regards the sacredness of a spoken word, will volunteer an oath. It is on this principle that our Lord gives forth his utterance against not only false but promiscuous swearing. It is this appeal to the sense of honour that really explains his application of the third Commandment. Why should you back your asseverations by solemn appeals to heaven, or to earth, or to Jerusalem, or to your own head ; as if you had power over these things, and might put them in pawn for your word ? But on another ground, why should you do so ? Is not your doing so, your swearing ultroneously, an admission that your simple word is not to be relied on ? Why not rather stand on your right to be believed for your mere word itself ? Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay ! “ Let your communication be Yea, yea ; Nay, nay : for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

Yes ; whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. The necessity of superadding to a simple affirmation the solemnity of swearing, arises out of the evil that is in man. He is so prone to falsehood that his fellow-men are afraid to trust him unless they put him upon oath. Nor may he refuse, when competently asked, to swear. For he cannot claim to be held entirely exempt from the general evil of humanity ; nor can he refuse the security which society is wont to demand. He cannot deny the reasonableness, and indeed the necessity, of the demand. David may have been hasty in saying : all men are liars. But the evil, at any rate, is so

common as to make the adoption of this precaution, for which ample divine warrant may be pleaded, an indispensable function, as it is an unchallengeable right, of all lawful magistracy.

Thus, while private and voluntary swearing is virtually an ultroneous confession of evil ; public and official swearing is a necessary safeguard against evil. I will not, of my own accord, swear ; for that amounts to an admission that my veracity needs that sort of backing. But I dare not refuse to swear when required by legitimate authority. For I acknowledge the reasonableness of the suspicion which men entertain of all human testimony ; and their right to protect themselves by insisting on all the corroboration which the most solemn appeal to heaven can give. Still, whatever is more than yea yea, nay nay, cometh of evil. It is of evil that this practice of swearing, even when most right and fitting, cometh among men on earth ; of the evil of men's deceitfulness, their proneness to prevaricate and lie. It is at the best a necessary evil.

And is it anything else when it is God who swears from heaven ? Of that oath also, of that oath pre-eminently, may it not be said that it cometh of evil ? Not indeed of the evil of anything false or suspicious on the part of him who swears ; but of the evil heart of unbelief in those to whom he swears. Evil ! Does it not come of evil that the most high God should be obliged, ere he can hope to be believed by the creature he has made, to have recourse to the expedient of an oath ? Evil ! Does it not come of evil that the Amen, the Faithful and True, should have to satisfy the insulting scruples of doubting men by what you and I, when we are shut up to it, feel to be a humiliation all but intolerable ?

Were ever any of you in the witness-box before a judge and jury of your countrymen ? Had ever any of you ten-

dered to you, in lowered tone, from the solemn bench, the simple but sublime form of words by which our law seeks to bind the consciences of all who give evidence before its tribunals? Could you repeat the words without a sort of shudder in your bosom, and a blush almost of shame upon your face? Was it not as if you were wounded in your honourable self-esteem? And were you not inclined still to hang your head, even when reflection reconciled you to the necessity of the procedure? And you blush still, if not for yourself, yet for the evil, the deplorable and universal evil, of human falsehood, out of which the stern necessity arose.

And what then are you to think of the evil in you, the inveterate evil of a doubting, distrusting, unbelieving heart, that makes it necessary for God to take such a step for the removal of your miserable questionings and fears? And what, on the other hand, are you to think of that God who, when nothing but such a step will suffice, does not refuse to take it? Claim on your part there is none. No right or reason have you to ask such a kind of satisfaction from God. Most presumptuous, most impious, is your hesitating to receive, with instant and unqualified fulness of trust, his mere simple, naked, unconfirmed, and uncorroborated word. Truly, it is the superabundance of grace, the very excess and overflowing exuberance of grace, when he so wonderfully condescends to your infirmity as to interpose the sanction of an oath; and of such an oath! When, swearing by himself, he refers you back behind his word to his essential nature; and opening up all that is perfect and glorious and unchangeable in his ineffable being and adorable perfections, would convince you at last, not only that the things spoken by him will come to pass because of what he says, but that they must come to pass because of what he is; and that sooner shall he cease to live and to possess the all-perfect character that belongs to him,

than your salvation, O believer in Jesus, shall fail of its accomplishment, or you, the very least of his little ones, shall perish. Such is the virtue, such the grace, of the divine oath.

II. The uses to which it is applied in Scripture may serve still farther to illustrate the real import and the graciousness of the oath. It may be considered in two aspects or relations in connection with the constitution of the mediatorial economy in the person and work of the great High Priest; and in connection with the carrying out of that economy.

We have an instance of the divine oath in connection with the mediatorial priesthood of Christ. And what is very seasonable and providential, we have an ample inspired explanation of it, as viewed in that connection. I refer to the oracle in Psalm cx. 4, as expounded in Hebrews vii. In that exposition much weight is attached to this one point of distinction between the Levitical priesthood and that of Christ, that in the last there was the interposition of the divine oath, which had no place in the other (vers. 20, 22, 28). The writer evidently regards this distinction in the constitution of the priesthood as materially affecting the character of the covenant or dispensation with which it is mediatorially connected (vers. 21, 22). To be made a priest with an oath is not only a higher honour than to be made a priest without an oath; it moreover fits the person so invested with the office for being the surety of a better covenant. But how is this? it may be fairly asked.

Let it be remembered that the oath brings upon the field, not only the divine word, but the divine name or nature. The priesthood made without the oath is doubtless ordained by God. It is ordained, however, not as having its ground or reason in the essential nature of God, but as founded upon a sovereign and discretionary exercise of his will. The law or

word of God makes priests of men having infirmity. And, so far as it goes, the law or word so appointing them is immutable. The mere announcement of the divine purpose in the matter secures its accomplishment.

But that purpose so announced is not a necessity of the divine nature. It is an arbitrary or discretionary act of the divine prerogative; an act upon which God might or might not resolve, without the essential perfections of his character being at all affected. It is quite otherwise with the arrangement to which the divine oath refers.

The priesthood of Christ is no mere arbitrary, discretionary ordinance, which, as being expedient to-day, God may institute by his sovereign authority in his word or law, and which, by the same sovereign authority, he may supersede to-morrow, as no longer needed and no longer useful. No; it is an office having its deep root in the very nature, the essential glory and perfection, of God himself. It is therefore unchangeable, not merely as God's word, but as his very being, is unchangeable. The word of God is indeed immutable, under the conditions attached to it when it is uttered. But it may be, according to these conditions, the basis of what is merely temporary, insufficient, and provisional. What is based on the absolute immutable nature of God must necessarily be both permanent and perfect.

Consider in this view the two contrasted priesthoods, and the two dispensations with which they are respectively connected.

Aaron and his successors, the priests made by the law without the oath, offer sacrifices and are the mediators of a covenant. The law or word of God sanctions both their office and their offering. But there is nothing in the person of any of these priests, or in any of the sacrifices offered, that makes him or it satisfying and suitable to the divine nature. On the contrary, there is a manifest incongruity. They are

not adequate to the real character and government of God. They do not meet the case. A frail mortal, himself a sinner, and liable to the doom of sin, never can be such a mediator as the holy character and righteous government of the offended Lawgiver requires. The blood of bulls and of goats can never take away sin.

Hence, whatever authority the word of the law, or the divine appointment in the law, may give to such a priest and to his service, neither he nor it has any standing within the circle of God's essential and eternal perfections. And both he and it, with the economy to which they belong, made by a word and by a word dissolved, pass from the world and the church of God, as things that decay, and wax old, and vanish away.

But the word of the oath makes a very different high priest, and a very different ministry of sacrifice. He who is thus made high priest is not a mere man having infirmity and not suffered to continue by reason of death, but the Son, who continueth ever, consecrated for evermore ; and the sacrifice he has to offer is not that of a mere animal victim, alike unfit to satisfy a just God and to represent guilty men, and so needing to be repeated daily in the courts of an earthly tabernacle. It is the sacrifice of himself ; the offering of himself once, and once for all, in his meritorious obedience and in his penal sufferings ; and the presenting of his one sacrifice continually before the throne on high.

Here is a mediator,—here is a mediation,—in true and full harmony with the real nature of God ; and therefore truly and fully fitted to meet the real exigencies of men ; a worthy mediator, a worthy mediation, for whom and for which a far deeper reason can be given than the mere discretionary *fiat* of the sovereign will of God. It is a mediator, it is a mediation, that, if constituted at all, must be constituted by the word of the oath. For the essential

attributes and perfections of the Godhead, to which God appeals when he swears by himself, are all bound up in this great economy. It is not merely in respect of what the Father says, that the Son holds the office and discharges the functions of High Priest and Mediator ; but also, and much more, in respect of what the Father is.

The successors of Aaron being made priests without the oath ; they and their services may all be superseded and become obsolete and effete, without any essential feature in the nature of God being touched, or any principle of his government being compromised. But God himself must change, or must cease to live ; before Christ his eternal Son, to whom he swears, "Thou art a priest for ever," can cease to be an effectual mediator, or his sacrifice to be an all-sufficient propitiation ; before his blood can lose its virtue to cleanse from all sin, or himself his power to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him ; before the covenant of which he is the ever-living Surety can be anything else than a covenant of freest, richest grace, of fullest, most perfect grace, on whose sure promises men may take hold for ever.

Founded on this primary use, if I may so speak, of the divine oath, as bearing on the constitution of the mediatorial economy in the person and work of the great High Priest, there are other instances of its use in Scripture, connected with the carrying out of that economy, to which it may be interesting and useful to advert.

Take these four, in particular : the Gospel call ; the doom of unbelief ; the hope of faith ; the triumph of the Church. With all the four, the oath of God is found associated.

1. The divine oath may be viewed in its bearing on the Gospel call. In that connection it occurs often virtually ; and expressly it occurs in this at least among other passages :

“As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

Thus viewed, the oath of God is peculiarly significant. It places the assurance which you may have, all of you, any of you, of God’s perfect willingness, his earnest longing, to receive you back to himself, on a footing such as, if you would but consider it, must make you feel that you dare not doubt, and cannot withstand, his affectionate importunity.

Oh ! that the blessed Spirit would open your eyes here to see and understand the real nature, the true character, of the God with whom you have to do, the God who so pathetically calls you. Oh ! that the Spirit would give you such an insight into what God is, as might at last make you apprehend how absolutely impossible it is that, being what he is, he can be wishing your destruction ; how it is of the very essence of his nature and character that he must be willing your return to himself. If you cannot believe what God says, I beseech you to consider what God is. Ah ! if you would but bring yourselves to do that, what a flood of light would be let in upon your souls, to chase many a dark thought of God for ever away.

In particular, how irrelevant, and altogether impertinent, would you feel all your questionings about his secret purposes to be ; how entirely beside and away from the one only consideration with which you have anything practical to do. What ! if one comes to you ; his eye all beaming with melting tenderness, and his heart manifestly throbbing with most disinterested love ; will you, before giving in to his persuasive voice, set yourselves to inquire into what may be his secret, ultimate plans ; turning upon the very contingency of

the sort of reception you may choose to give to his advances ; when at a glance you may see what his nature really is, and what, in harmony with that nature, his feelings towards you must necessarily be ? “ Away ! ” you would exclaim, “ away with all unworthy doubts and misgivings that might be started in regard to his ulterior designs ! Enough for me, that he is plainly not the kind of person to have any delight in my destruction. By that open countenance, and loving voice, and beckoning hand, I cannot but feel that he longs and yearns for me to be his ! ”

Yes, brethren, when God has shown you, in the entire economy of grace, and specially in the gift of his dear Son, and in the infinite fulness and sufficiency of his great work of atonement, what manner of Being he is ; and when, swearing by himself, appealing to his name, his nature, his open heart, he would have you seriously to ask if such a Being as he proves himself to be can really be one who issues insincere invitations and beguiles with hollow hopes ; will you not repudiate the thought of making him a liar, and at last bring yourselves to believe, the Spirit moving you, that the great living heart of the Eternal Father is towards you ; and that he is in earnest, and means what he says, when in his Son he cries—“ Turn ye ; turn ye, why will ye die ? As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live.”

2. The oath of God stands connected with the doom of unbelief. “ I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest ” (Ps. xciv. 11). This is one of the most impressive and awful of all its uses. It is indeed a terrible thought. For it means that God executes his threatened judgments, not because he delights in the infliction of evil ; nor even because he is determined to verify his word ; but because, being such as he is, even he has no alternative ! Ah ! if sinners had nothing more to fear at the hands of God than his reluctance

even to seem to falsify his threatening word, they might easily be relieved from all their apprehensions. The single case of Nineveh might set their minds at rest. Certainly, on that occasion, God did not show any particular sensitiveness as to his own consistency. He did not consider himself committed by the mere utterance of his word. Nothing could be more absolute and unequivocal, according to all human judgment, than the prophecy of Nineveh's doom. But Nineveh repented. The reason for the threatened doom, so far as it was founded on the nature of God, ceased to exist. And that reason for judgment being got rid of, the word which had been uttered was not suffered to stand in the way!

Oh! if there be a single soul here, against whom God has written some bitter, terrible word of wrath!—if there be one awakened sinner to whom the Holy Ghost is even now bringing home the recorded sentence of death, as pronounced against him;—I tell thee, brother, that right gladly will the Father even now, this very instant, undo the deed, cancel the judgment, reverse the verdict, if thou wilt but now turn, and believe, and live. Yes! Though a thousand cavillers may raise questions as to how that may consist with the immutability of his word,—what matters that to him?—or to thee, brother? Only let thy salvation become consistent with his immutable nature, his essential perfections, his inviolable rule and government; and immediately all the past is forgotten. Believe this. Be sure that, in spite of all God's righteous denunciations, thy sin is within the reach of pardon. For dost thou not see how glorifying it is to his name, as well as how grateful to his heart, were it in the face of a whole volume of threats, to save sinners in Christ, to save thee,—thee, brother, as well as me, who am of sinners the chief?

All the more awful, however, does the announcement of final wrath thus become. To feel that, upon a certain supposition, I must perish because God has said it, is a solemn

enough thought. To feel that, in the case supposed, I must perish, not only because God has said it, but because even God himself, being what he is, cannot order it otherwise, is surely more solemn still.

Oh ! what weight is there, in this view, in the warning drawn from the fate of the Israelites who fell in the wilderness—" I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." I swear to them. Their sin was now such as to make it not merely inconsistent with my word, but inconsistent with my very nature, to let them find any place of repentance, to let them enter into my rest !

Consider, O friends, the penal severity of God as thus grounded. Be sure that it is no sovereign decree merely, no discretionary choice, but a stern necessity in the nature of sin and of God that renders that severity inevitable.

What was it that shut up the righteous Father to the infliction of the sentence on the head of his own dear Son, when he stood before him as the representative of the guilty ? It was no mere regard to his own consistency ; no obstinate determination simply to do as he had said he would do ; that moved the Father to plunge the awakened sword of justice into the bosom of the Son. It was a more terrible necessity by far ; a necessity lying deep in the divine nature. And " if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?" " How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?" (Heb. ii. 3).

3. The divine oath is all-important in its bearing on the security of the believer's hope. That indeed is its immediate application here.

The question of your progress and perseverance to the end has been raised ; by the reproof and exhortation and warning contained in the previous passage. Your only safety against backsliding and apostasy lies, as you are told, in getting out of the mere elements of the gospel viewed as a method of

personal relief, and passing on to the perfection of insight and sympathy, as regards the higher aspects and bearings of it, in relation to the glorious name of God.

But, alas ! one may say, what confidence can I ever have in that line ? The perfection to which I am to go on, alas ! how distant. The sin into which I may relapse, alas ! how near. What is to give me confidence ? Is it my own diligence in following, not slothfully, the saints that have gone before ? Or is it my own carefulness to depart from the iniquity that dogs my steps behind ? No, brother. Both of these conditions are indispensable, but neither of them is to be relied on as giving thee assurance. But thou art in the hands of a God whose name, and nature, and character thou knowest. And, to put an end to all strife and debate in thy heart, he swears by himself to thee. He points to his essential perfection. He bids thee consider, not only what he says, but what he is ; what thou in Christ hast seen and found him to be. And he tells thee that, as surely as he is what he is, as surely as he liveth, so surely he pledges himself to thee, and must keep faith with thee.

Frail indeed is thy vessel, as it is tossed on life's troubled sea. But it bears the name of the unchangeable Jehovah. And as surely as Jehovah liveth, so surely is that vessel safe. Far back, in the dateless era of the past eternity,—deep down in the counsels of the eternal mind, the cable-chain is fixed,—which, winding its unseen way through the ages, fastens itself around thy tiny bark, steadying it amid ocean's storms. And, shooting out ahead, that same unbroken cable-chain reaches on to the haven of rest, and is riveted securely there. Thy little bark is out at sea ; but the anchor to which the cable-chain is fastened is within the veil. And the cable-chain no force of man or devil can sever. Hopefully then stand to thy post in that bark, thou Christian mariner ! Ply the oars ; set all the sails ; in spite

of cross currents and baffling winds. Steadily, by the guidance of that ever shortening cable-chain, thou art moving on to the happy shore. Nearer and nearer art thou drawing to it. Shorter and ever shorter is that marvellous line becoming that joins the vessel to the anchor. Hark ! at last, the rolling of the eddying surge. One lurch at the bar, and the breakers are past. Thy bark is where its anchor of hope has long been. Thou art thyself within the veil, "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (ver. 20).

4. One other application of the divine oath I can but touch upon ; it is the connection in which it stands with the ultimate triumph of the Lord's church and cause in the world. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself ; the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isa. xlv. 22, 23). The purpose of God to fill the earth with the knowledge of himself and of his glory is a purpose founded, not upon his mere sovereign word, but upon his essential nature. It is no arbitrary decree, but an absolute necessity of his very being, which requires that the light which has come into the world shall ultimately dispel the world's darkness, and that the kingdom which the God of heaven has set up in the earth shall in the end make all other kingdoms its own. The time may seem long ; the struggle arduous and doubtful. But as surely as God continues to be the God he is ; as surely as the Lord liveth ; so surely shall his gospel make way among the nations, till all the earth is filled with his glory.

Many practical lessons might be drawn from this theme. I content myself with one closing counsel. Cease from all vain speculations as to the secret things, the unknown pur-

poses, of God. Rest in what he has revealed to you of himself; of what he is. Acquaint yourselves with God, and be at peace, according to that saying, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (Ps. ix. 10.)

In the case of an earthly friend, your knowledge of his nature, your insight into his character, might be expected to prevail over many dark surmises and doubtful suspicions, which apparent anomalies in his conduct, or rumours and speculations about his intentions, might otherwise occasion. If he had admitted you to an intimate acquaintance with him; if he had opened to you his very heart, his heart of hearts, and unveiled to you the essence of his moral being; he might fairly ask you to take many things on trust, and suffer many things to remain for a time unexplained, without your confidence in him being at all shaken. Especially if, as to all that could concern your personal relation to him, and your personal friendship with him, he once for all made a solemn and affectionate appeal to that nature, that heart of his, which he had so fully laid bare to you; and bid you ask yourself, in any moment of hesitancy, if the truth of such a nature, if the love of such a heart, could possibly fail you? Ah! would you not ever after turn a deaf ear to every hint that would cast the shadow of a doubt on your friend's honoured name? Would you not stifle every rising inclination to pry into his secrets? Would you not resolutely put away from you every temptation to question his proceedings? No! you would say. Perplexing as some of these may seem, and capable even of an unfavourable and unfriendly construction, I know my friend too well to let a single thought dishonouring to him find a moment's lodgment in my bosom. What he does I may not know now; but I shall know hereafter. Meanwhile, knowing himself, what he is, as I do, I will trust and not be afraid.

Even so know ye the Lord. Come, obtain through

grace an intelligent and sympathising insight into his very nature ; what he is in himself ; God is light ; God is love. And then, far back behind any word, in the very being and character of your God, you have a ground of reliance not to be touched. See the great heart of the eternal Father opened to you in his eternal Son ! And be ashamed of your hard thoughts, your vain speculations, your endless doubts. Learn, the Holy Spirit teaching you, to know and to do justice to the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ ; his Father and your Father ; his God and your God ; and to say, with one who had less knowledge of him by far than you may have, “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him ” (Job xiii. 15).

XI.

THE INDWELLING WORD OF CHRIST.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”—COLLOSSIANS III. 16.

THIS exhortation is connected, on the one hand, with the preceding experience out of which it springs (vers. 14, 15); and, on the other hand, with the outward expression in which it issues and finds vent (ver. 16.) But it is complete in itself, and may be so considered.

The word of Christ here spoken of can scarcely mean his personal teaching merely. It must be held, as I apprehend it, to embrace the whole revelation of him, which we have from himself in Scripture; the whole Bible, in short. Only it is the Bible viewed in a peculiar light; not as a book written about Christ; nor even as a book virtually written by Christ, long ago, but as his present word; the medium of his present communication of his present mind and will; affording the means and materials of present speech; the organ through which he personally confers with us, here and now.

The phrase “dwell in you” must therefore be taken in a strictly personal sense. It is not to be diffused and evaporated, as if it referred to the Church collective; the general body of professing Christians. It is here, as elsewhere in Paul’s writings, altogether personal, individual. Take some instances: “If the Spirit of him that raised up

Jesus from the dead dwell in you" (Rom. viii. 11). "God hath said, I will dwell in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16). "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephes. iii. 17). "The unfeigned faith that is in thee ; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice ; and I am persuaded in thee also" (2 Tim. i. 5). "That good thing which is committed unto thee keep, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. i. 14). Of these five instances, only one, the second, can admit of the diffusive or collective interpretation. And even that is better rendered, as individually and personally applicable, "I will dwell in them." I proceed therefore, on that understanding of the exhortation, to speak first of the word of Christ dwelling in you ; and, secondly, of the word of Christ dwelling in you richly.

I. Let the word of Christ dwell in you. This mere indwelling of the word of Christ in you at all is a great thought. > It is a great experimental attainment. Consider some of the conditions of its practical and personal realisation.

1. It implies a sense of the preciousness of Christ himself ; his preciousness to them that believe ; his preciousness realised by faith. No one's word will dwell in you, unless he is precious to you whose word it is. The word of one who is to you himself an object of dislike will be angrily or contemptuously rejected, after it has stung you to resentment. The word of one who is to you an object of indifference will pass swiftly by you, or through you, without effecting any abiding lodgment within you.

How much of the word, as the word of Christ, may you thus miss, if Christ himself personally is not precious to you ! In many parts of the Bible you think that Christ is only very dimly and distantly to be found, if he is to be found at all. Whole chapters and books are read, without their suggesting to you anything that can be called the word of

Christ ; or what may come home to you as Christ speaking, and speaking to you. Even passages that are fullest of Christ, of his own sayings and actions, do not bring Christ himself before you, as speaking personally to you.

But it is only when it does that, and in so far as it does that, that the Bible, or any portion of it, is practically and influentially the word of Christ to you. The letter of an absent friend is his word to me, when by means of it I conjure him up, and call him before me, as himself, in his own loved person, speaking to me. Then his word takes hold on me, and dwells in me. Christ is not an absent friend. He is present with me when I search the Scriptures which testify of him. He is here living and present with me, as I read or listen. If he is precious to me, as believing in him, I must feel him, and realise him to be here ; living and present here now with me ; to teach me, at every step ; upon every holy text, and every sacred saying ; what I am to regard as his present word to me, here and now.

Thus, through my love to him and his preciousness to me, even what of Scripture may seem to have little or nothing of Christ may become his word to me. Lord Jesus ! what hast thou to say to me, here and now ; by thy Spirit taking of what is thine, and showing it to me ; about such a seemingly Christless passage as this or that ?—a passage, at first sight, so empty of thee ? What is thy word to me, here and now, in it and about it ? What is its bearing on thee and on me, here and now ? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

2. The preciousness of Christ's word, as well as of Christ himself, is essential to its dwelling in you. This indeed follows as a natural and necessary consequence. If Christ is precious, his word must be precious. Still, this inference may suggest a new line of thought. The word of a precious friend is precious to you in itself ; almost before you know

what it is, and what it contains. You take it on trust beforehand, and welcome it, even before examination, as the word of your beloved. The very outside of a letter from him is to you a welcome sight.

But your friend's word becomes unspeakably more precious when you study it particularly ; and especially when you test experimentally its special suitableness to your case ; when you find it to be of real value to you in your present circumstances, here and now. It is so, may it not be so, with the Bible as the word of Christ to you ? Is there any passage of Scripture that is at this moment, or has been, say last night or this morning, much in your thoughts ? Is it a passage which Christ has just been using, or has formerly used, as the means of his speaking to you by his Spirit a word in season when you were weary ? The preciousness of it, as the word of Christ here and now to you, felt to be so, will make it dwell in you.

I suppose there is scarcely one of you who cannot name some text or portion of Scripture, in itself apparently rather barren of spiritual meaning and unction, having in it, one would say, little or nothing of Christ, or of what is Christ's, which somehow has got to be one of your best remembrancers of Christ ; a frequent and favourite visitor of your soul ; and a visitor always suggestive of Christ ; of Christ speaking to you, by means of it, some word in season in your weariness. You say it is association. The law of association explains the experience. And so far it does. The scriptural text or passage is connected in some marked way with some marked crisis in your spiritual history. In some critical exigency, among other Bible sayings seemingly much more to the purpose, this one has somehow come up ; as a whisper of consolation from the lips of Jesus in your deep distress ; or a breath of his pity stealing into your sin-laden and sorrow-laden soul ; or a faint murmur presaging the loud trump of wrath,

if you are on the point of giving way to temptation. So it has struck you. And so it leaves its sting and its solace in you.

Well, what is that experience? Is it not the word realised by you, in this one particular instance, realised by you experimentally, as precious, practically precious, making itself felt as the word of Christ dealing with you personally in it, the precious word of a precious Christ?

Now what should hinder the whole Bible, in all its minute details, as well as in its general scope and substance, from thus becoming to you, not as a whole, but in its minutest parts, the word of Christ, and as such dwelling in you? For, in this practical point of view, it matters little or nothing what theory of the Christology of Scripture you may adopt. How, and how far, particular books or verses of Scripture bear on Christ's person and work; whether historically or symbolically, in prophecy or in psalmody, is not the question here. There need be no straining of Scripture to make it always and everywhere redolent of Christ. No; you may use it freely, in all its books and chapters and verses, according to the nature of their several contents, just as you would use the miscellaneous writings of any author; only with a reverential remembrance of who the author in this case is.

For I point to a quite different, and altogether peculiar and unique way, of seeking and finding Christ and his word all through the Bible. It is the way, not of getting it to speak to you about Christ, but rather of getting Christ to speak to you about it; and so to make it all his. In plain terms, let it all, every bit and fragment of it, be welded into your Christian experience, and become part and parcel of it. Let there be nothing in it that is not somehow, in your experience, connected with Christ; with Christ living in you, with Christ in you the hope of glory.

Do you ask how this may be? I answer, by the Spirit being given in answer to the prayer of faith. He teaches you all things; whatever Christ has said. He teaches you them all as said by Christ. Some of them may be things which are in themselves far enough away from Christ; with little of Christ in them. But dwell, in the Spirit, even upon what in Scripture may seem to be most Christless. Do not force it to testify of Christ formally, whether explicitly or implicitly, so as to offend critics and perplex ordinary readers. Take it all in its plain meaning. But expect that in it, and by means of it, Christ may have something to say to you; some lesson to teach; some comfort to impart; some reproof to administer; some quickening impulse or influence to apply. Dwell on it, in that view. Pray over it. Link on the most unpromising text with some personal dealing of the Spirit with your soul. Merge it in your present spiritual experience. And I venture to assure you that, however little of Christ there was for you in the dead letter of that text before, it will henceforth, whenever it recurs to you, be instinct with life as the word of Christ; his living word to you at the time; and as such, it will be very precious.

3. The felt preciousness of real present and living intercourse between Christ and you will cause the word, as his word, to abide in you. For it is his word that sustains and keeps up the intercourse. It is the word, as his word, that is the manual, as it were, or handbook of his conversation with you; and consequently also the manual or handbook of your conversation with him. It is in that character and capacity mainly that it is to dwell in you. It is for conversational purposes, and, as it were, colloquial uses. I would have this statement plainly and familiarly understood. It embodies a principle of great practical importance. You are to abide or dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. This mutual or reciprocal abiding of you in Christ, and Christ in you, is

through that which you have heard from the beginning abiding in you ; or otherwise, through his word dwelling in you. For, whatever there may be of the supernatural—and it is all supernatural—in this communion between Christ and you, his dwelling in you and your dwelling in him ; it is yet so far natural, that it may be, and must be, realised in the natural and ordinary way of communication and fellowship between intelligent beings knowing and recognising one another. It must partake of the character of conversation, or conversational intercourse, of a verbal sort. There cannot really be any conscious communion, any interchange of mind with mind, or heart with heart ; none at least that can be sustained for any length of time, or that can impress itself permanently on the consciousness and the memory ; no indwelling of my heart and mind in you, or of your heart and mind in me, without language ; spoken or written language ; or language, if you will, of the silent embrace, the look, the tear ; more expressive of intelligence, at certain seasons, than any words. I put no faith in any other sort of union and communion between you and me than such as language may and must interpret and define. I put as little faith in any other sort of union and communion between you and Christ. It is all apt to be quite mystical, fantastic, fanatical ; visionary and ideal ; except in so far as it is articulate, conversational, and verbal.

There is room for self-deception here. We may dream of our being in Christ, and Christ being in us, after some vague, undefined, sleepy fashion ; whence comes a sort of quiet and quiescent half-unconscious resting of him on us, and of us in him. Is it more than a dream, or dreamy delusion, if there is not actual converse and talk between us—verbal converse, colloquial talk ? Of course, it may not be converse or talk so audibly carried on as to be overheard by men or angels. It may not be put in express and formal terms when Christ and

you are alone together ; he alone with you alone ; in the closet, with the door shut. He and you do not make speeches or write letters to one another. Much may be understood silently between him and you : much that is unutterable. But still, consider the case of Paul, in his highest heavenly rapture. Paul heard words ; words unspeakable no doubt ; unlawful or impossible for a man to utter. But still he heard words. The rapturous insights and emotions found verbal expression. Words were used. Much more in your case ; even when your abiding in Christ and his abiding in you partakes of the closest, warmest, most loving kind of embrace, silent and deep, the strange flowing into one of his love and your faith ; words may come in. Nay, in such experience especially words should come in ; to chasten the experience, and give it a definite voice and a definite aim. And the words should be articulate and clear ; whether uttered or not. They should still be words ; thoughts and feelings becoming verbal ; formed into sentences more or less broken ; but yet such as may suffice for carrying on real personal conversation.

Thus, words must be used to bring the fellowship into intelligible shape, and turn it to practical account ; as real and personal. What have you to say to one another, what are you saying to one another, in this hour of mutual confidence and unreserved intercourse ? That is the question. What are you saying to him ? What is he saying to you ? So he himself puts the manner of this intercourse—" If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7). There is speech here, articulate speech, on both sides ; Christ's words abiding in you ; and your asking what you will. " If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). How is this to be realised ? How, but by the

Holy Ghost "teaching you and bringing to your remembrance all things whatsoever Christ hath said unto you"? Still it is speech, intelligible and articulate speech, that is the means or medium of communion. There is, I repeat, no real, trustworthy indwelling of you in Christ, or of Christ in you, on any other footing. None. For the pointed, personal, practical question is not to be resented or evaded. What is your conversation? What is your talk? What are you speaking about? What are you saying to one another?

That you may meet this question, without resenting it or evading it, let the word of Christ dwell in you. For it is his word that is the staple of the verbal and conversational intercourse in question. It is the word, as Christ's. For in this talk, to use the plainest terms, he must take the lead. He suggests the topics. He supplies the vocabulary. His word is the safe guide and full storehouse of the conversation; not his word merely, as the general body of Scripture testifying about him and inspired by his Spirit; but his word in detail, brought home to you personally, as his word to you. It may be co-extensive with all Scripture. It should be so, and will be so, the more we study all Scripture as his. But, at any rate, that word of Christ, the word thus experimentally realised as his, in whole or in part, is the medium of communication between him and you. He uses it in speaking to you. And you use it in speaking to him.

Thus used, it will dwell in you. Otherwise, it will go away. The letter may remain. Strings of texts, verses in abundance, whole chapters and books, may continue with you fitfully or dreamily. The instinct of memory may mechanically, as it were, recall them; and the tongue may fluently and glibly quote them. But the virtue is gone out of them. The savour, the unction, of there being Christ's word in them to you, is lost. They are not to you the word of Christ dwelling in you. If you would have the word to dwell or abide in

you, as the precious word of a precious Saviour, you must let it be in you useful and available ; always turned to account ; for the keeping up of real, personal, precious intercourse between him and you. Let it all, every portion of it, as it comes up in your thoughts, take shape virtually and mentally as a dialogue. Let it be a real dialogue. Let me, before suffering any passage of Scripture that has arrested, impressed, moved me, to pass away from me, make it the occasion and the means of my saying so and so to him, and his saying so and so to me.

No Scripture thus used will pass away: The word of Christ, as the precious word of a precious Saviour, realised as the means of a most precious, because real and personal, converse, between him and you, will assuredly dwell in you richly.

II. "Richly!" This qualifying word may apply in more senses than one. It must do so; for it touches a rich subject.

1. It may refer to quantity. Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, copiously. Let there be plenty of it, rich plenty. Let the mind be richly stored, let the soul be richly furnished, with the word of Christ; the word as he sets his seal to it as his, and by his Spirit makes it in your experience his very word to you. Ah! how much is there of the Bible that does not dwell in you because you do not recognise and realise it as the word of Christ; his present word to you. Whole chapters there may be that have not, in your consciousness, become linked to any gracious dealing of Christ with you. These will not dwell in you. But let them become part and parcel of your inward personal experience of Christ communing with you. Let all Scripture be thus applied. There will be a rich abundance of the word of Christ dwelling in you.

2. The term "richly" may have respect to quality as

well as quantity ; not merely to the amount of matter, as it were, lodged in you ; but to the kind of matter ; its inherent energy and influence. The term richly may have, in some sense, an active signification. A rich manure is a manure that enriches the soil. And it dwells in the soil richly in proportion as it enriches the soil ; turning its dry and hard sterility into rich and unctuous and fruitful mould. So let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Let it dwell in you so as to enrich your souls.

Here too, if it is to dwell in you richly in this sense, it must dwell in you as the word of Christ. In this view, that is especially needful. For such is the poverty of the soil ; and not its poverty only, but its intractable perversity ; that otherwise even the word will, instead of enriching the soul in which it is made to dwell, become itself partaker of its blight and barren deadness ; and end in being as salt which has lost its savour, incapable of seasoning or quickening anything.

Is not this Paul's testimony ? The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life ; making it truly the living word of a living Christ. Let it so dwell in you ; enriching your whole inner man ; pouring ever anew and afresh into you,—shedding abroad ever anew and afresh in you,—rich and full discoveries and experiences of Christ's own love and the Father's. Is it not as the pouring out of a rich ointment, pervading with its rich unction, filling with its rich odour, the whole house or chamber of your inmost soul ?

Ah ! how penetrating as well as powerful should be the virtue of this indwelling in you of the word of Christ ! How should it reach to every nook and corner of your outward and inward life ; smoothing all asperities, sweetening whatever is sour, softening whatever is hard, breaking the very stones, melting the iron ore, impregnating with the very meekness and gentleness of Christ the dreary

wildness of those once unsubdued and unruly hearts of yours, and turning them into gardens of rich divine husbandry, out of whose broken depths the fruit of the Spirit may richly grow.

3. This rich indwelling of the word of Christ in you may be held to correspond to the riches of him whose word it is ; to be in some measure proportioned to his own riches. And what are these ? Riches of all sorts ; of goodness ; of glory ; of wisdom ; of knowledge ; of grace ; exceeding riches of grace ; the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is the word of this rich one that is to dwell in you richly ; to dwell in you as making you partakers with him in his riches, in all his riches, unsearchable as they are.

4. It is to dwell in you, not only as rich receivers, but as rich dispensers also, of the riches of him whose word it is. If it dwells in you richly, it must go forth from you richly ; copiously ; abundantly ; freshly ; in full and living flow. Freely you receive ; and freely you give ; of the word of Christ dwelling in you richly. Richly endowed by the word of Christ dwelling in you richly, you are to be richly productive ; richly fruit-bearing ; rich in faith ; rich in good works ; rich in all bountiful and practical exhibition of the unsearchable riches of Christ ; after a free, bold, joyous fashion.

For here, ere I close, let me ask you to notice the social bearing of the precept in the text, as imbedded in the context. On the one hand, it is associated with the preceding context. " Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called, in one body ; and be ye thankful" (vers. 12, 15).

Here are gracious elements ; bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearance, and forgiveness ; Christ-like forgiveness ; charity, as the bond of perfectness ; the peace of God ruling in the heart ; unity thence ; and thankfulness. On the other hand, it is associated with what follows—"In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (ver. 16) ; wise teaching and monition ; decent and devout singing.

In either view, this indwelling in you of the word of Christ is not the indwelling in you of what is hard, dry, stiff, formal ; like a mass of dead matter crammed into a dead receptacle ; as bales of goods are packed in a warehouse ; or loads of unread learning are crowded on the shelves of a library, kept mainly for show. It is the indwelling in you of what is free and fresh and living as the breezes of heaven ; gushing, flowing, as Jordan's full flood or Jacob's well ; or say rather, as the water of which Christ spoke to the woman at Jacob's well, when he said, "The water which I shall give, shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Then, "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." Let the abundance of the heart be the word of Christ dwelling in you richly. Then it will be no dead letter, but a living spirit ; Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Let the word of Christ so dwell in you. Let it be Christ himself, dwelling in you ; Christ himself, the living word. Let his word, or himself the word, dwell in you richly ; moulding, fashioning, vivifying, regulating, your whole inner man ; all its powers, faculties, affections ; its susceptibilities and sensibilities ; its movements of will. Let his word, let himself in his word, give his own tone and temper to all your emotions of joy and sorrow ; of fear, or anxiety, or love, or hope. Let all within you be thus imbued, not stiffly and

artificially, but spontaneously and gladly, with the word of Christ dwelling in you richly by the Spirit; and so becoming Christ himself dwelling in you as the word of life. Then, let there go forth from you, not stiffly and artificially, but spontaneously and gladly and lovingly, streams of overflowing benignity and benevolence; rich and gracious influences of holy zeal and love and joy; to the glory of God, celebrated in songs of praise; and the edifying of the church, in wise teaching and admonition.

In conclusion, let the three following counsels suffice for practical application of our theme or text.

1. Make sure of the first condition of the indwelling of Christ's word in you; the preciousness of Christ himself. This implies you dealing with Christ personally; closing with him in his dealing with you; and so finding him to be precious. Ah! make sure of that; whoever you are, whatever you are, to look to Christ now. Embrace him now. Let him embrace you now. Let there be a close and affectionate mutual embrace between him and you.

2. See to it that nothing is allowed to dwell in you that may be apt to hinder the indwelling in you of the word of Christ. Mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth. And beware of allowing any root of bitterness to lurk in you unseen and unconfessed; which yet springing up may trouble you.

3. Make full proof of all suitable helps for the indwelling of the word of Christ in you. Especially, put it to use. When you enter into your closet and shut the door; it is not for vague musing or melancholy dreaming: it is for real, personal, articulate, converse with Christ; for private, confidential talk, if you will. What a demand is there here for the word of Christ abiding in you richly. Doubtless, the Spirit conducts the intercourse. But he must have materials.

And they are furnished in the word of Christ. For the Spirit would not have all to be inarticulate sighing or unutterable groaning in the fellowship which he constitutes and sustains. He will minister even in that extremity ; in that sad experience. He helpeth our infirmities (Rom. viii. 26). But, ordinarily, he would have us to use speech ; not loud, but though low, as in a whisper, still clear. What have I to say to thee ? What hast thou to say to me ?

XII.

CHRIST THE ONLY GAIN.

“That I may win Christ, and be found in him.”—PHILIPPIANS III. 8, 9.

THIS is perfect security and consummate blessedness. The language indicates at once a goal and a starting-post; an end and a beginning; that I may win Christ, the goal or end I have been seeking to reach; that I may be found in him, ready, not only for resistance to old adversaries, but for a new start and onward movement towards divine perfection.

“That I may win Christ.” Observe how this idea of winning Christ fits into the apostle’s previous statement of his experience. He speaks of certain things which he had been accustomed to regard as gain (ver. 7). He enumerates some of them (vers. 5, 6). They are all of them spiritual privileges or attainments; qualifications valuable in a religious or spiritual point of view. No doubt they secured to one possessing them,—and especially to such a one as Paul,—a large measure of what men are wont to covet as prizes in this world. Never man surrendered a more hopeful career than Paul did when he became a Christian. But it is not to any loss of that nature that he here points. The things in respect of which he once thought he might trust in the flesh, he prized not as giving him a good standing before men, but as giving him a right standing in the sight of God. In that view they were gain to him. But he was led to count them

loss. "I have done with them all," he cries. "I count them but dung, if, instead of them, I may win Christ."

"That I may be found in him." For if only I once win Christ, then, whosoever seeks me finds me in Christ. Whatever may be the purpose for which I am sought, I am found in Christ. Is it, on the one hand, that I may meet and answer old charges brought against me? I am found in Christ (ver. 9), not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Is it, on the other hand, that I may merge the past in the future; forgetting things behind, reaching forth unto things before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Still let me be found in Christ (vers. 10, 11), "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Let us consider—

- I. What it is to win Christ.
- II. What it is to be found in Christ.

I. To win, to gain (*κεεξδῶσω*, ver. 8) Christ, is—1, to count him gain (*κεεξδῶη*, ver. 7); 2, to covet and seek him as gain; 3, to appropriate him as gain; 4, to enjoy him as gain.

1. To count Christ gain. Once, my circumcision, my place in a pious family, my strict sect, my fervid zeal, my blameless observance of the law—these, and the like gifts and endowments, were, in a religious view, as grounds of confidence, gain to me. Now I count them all loss for Christ. Christ is now to me what these other things were, gain. Christ alone is, in that view, the only gain. There is here a great change of mind from what is natural to us. There is an entirely new estimate of gain and loss. And observe

what is the object in question with reference to which this new estimate of gain and loss is formed. It is my standing before God, my relation to him, my acceptance in his sight. What is gain to me is what puts me on a right footing with God. This I once thought that my personal qualifications of birth, profession, privilege, attainment, might do. Now I see that for any such purpose they are useless, and worse than useless. In the view of the end for which I once prized them, I now perceive that Christ is gain. There is much implied in your really, with true conviction, perceiving this.

(1.) You are in earnest as regards the end with reference to which you estimate what is gain. That end is your being in a position (ver. 2) to worship God in the spirit and with joy; your being entitled to have confidence in his presence; your being upon terms of favour with him. Now, are you in earnest here? Is your standing before God really matter of concern to you? Is the question a serious one with you, Do I stand well with my God? Is it felt to be vital?

Naturally it is not so. You care little, or not at all, for the righting of your position towards God. You may care for your being safe in the position in which you are. You may have some anxiety about the consequences of continuing in that position, and some desire to evade or to escape from them. You may prize and welcome any device that looks that way. The trees of the Lord's garden to hide among; fallen fig-leaves sewed together to cover your nakedness; these are in that view gain to you. As to anything more; as to what God thinks of you, how God feels towards you, what you are to him and he is to you,—as to all that,—alas! how indifferent and unconcerned can you be!

Is it otherwise with you now? Is it a distress to you,—a real grief,—that there should be any misunderstanding between you and your Maker? Are you so smitten with a

sense of his glorious and amiable majesty, and the misery of your being outcast from him, that no mere measure of indulgence on God's part, and no imagination of impunity on your part, can content you now? Ah! you cry, I would not merely reckon on the chance of somehow not being condemned at last. I desire to stand right with my God now. I care not, in comparison, for mere impunity. It is not exemption from suffering I solicit. I think I may almost say I could accept the punishment of my sins. But, oh! I want this long and dreary warfare between my Maker and myself to be well ended. I would fain see how again all between us may be peace? Is that, or anything like it, your desire?

Then (2) it is no wonder that what things were gain to you are now counted loss. There are many things a man may have about him, many things he may do, that may have a certain kind of value, if all he cares for is the patching up of a sort of truce or compromise with God,—or rather not so much with God as with his own conscience. But how worthless are they all when the question comes to be, Are God and the man personally to be thoroughly at one? For in truth they have no real bearing on that question at all. They may be thought perhaps to have an efficacy as modifying or mitigating the results of the relation already subsisting between the parties. But the relation itself they do not touch. They do not cancel guilt. They profess only to supply a sort of set-off against it. They do not overcome alienation. They can only serve to dissemble and disguise it. They do not establish cordial faith and love. Rather they are to be taken as a substitute for these affections; as making up for the want of them. The things in respect of which I once thought I might have confidence in the flesh—my Christian birth, my baptism, my strict profession, my freedom from gross vice, my punctual devotion, my

zealous service,—what are they all now to me, when I am made to feel that there is something originally, radically, fatally, wrong in the footing on which I am with my God, and that I never can be happy or free or loving until that is righted? I may increase my painstaking in every pious duty. I may strain every nerve in trying to do good and to be good. I may wage a fierce warfare with the evil that is in me. I may chastise and mortify myself. I may exhaust myself in efforts to please him in whose hands is my life. But alas! it is all in vain. These methods will stand me in stead no longer. They do not heal the hurt. They do not mend the matter. Rather, as regards a really good understanding, things grow worse and worse. The more I seek to stand right with my Father in heaven, the more hopeless does my miserable state of wrong standing become.

(3). But just as all things else are thus felt to be worthless dung, Christ is seen to be gain. Oh! the relief, the joy, of a single glimpse of Christ breaking in upon the dark experience of a man desperately trying to be just with God! Oh! the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus! Yes; in your extremity, all the supports you ever thought you could lean on before God giving way, Christ may well be counted gain; Christ the reconciler; Christ the peacemaker; Christ the expiator of guilt; Christ the justifier of the ungodly; Christ the Son, coming forth from the Father to open to you the Father's heart, that you may know and believe the love wherewith the Father loveth you! This is the Christ who now comes instead of all that you ever reckoned gain, all that you ever thought might warrant confidence before God. And how infinitely surpassing, in that view, is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ! It is indeed, you now cry, an excellent thing to know Christ; Christ is worth the knowing, worth the winning. Is he not a Christ who,

if I win him, will thoroughly meet my case? Having him, I must be complete. For I see in him sin, all sin, freely pardoned, without price or penance of mine; myself a sinner, of sinners the chief, no longer under condemnation, but acquitted, justified, accepted; the prison garb of my guilt exchanged for the fairest robe child ever wore. I see an instant end of the weary attempt to amend the old position, and instead of that the way wonderfully opened for the immediate occupying of a new one. I see free grace, perfect righteousness, a holy salvation, life, love, liberty, all in Christ. All else is loss; Christ alone, Christ is counted gain.

2. Christ is coveted and sought as gain. You not merely count Christ as gain, but covet and seek him as gain. But are not these two things the same? Or does not the one include the other? What I count or reckon to be gain, how can I but covet and desire and seek? Nay, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? The question must be faithfully pressed home. Are you really so thoroughly in earnest in this matter as not merely to perceive that Christ is gain, but to be honestly willing to possess this gain? Nor is it merely to the careless and unconverted that the question applies, but even perhaps still more to not a few of those who are awakened and convinced.

In dealing with a case of genuine spiritual distress, when the conscience has been deeply moved, the understanding enlightened, the whole inner man agitated. I meet with a sort of unconquerable repugnance to the acceptance of the gospel, an obstinate refusing to be comforted, which fairly baffles and greatly perplexes me. The sufferer, I cannot for a moment doubt, is sincere. He sincerely owns guilt. He sincerely renounces all confidence in the flesh. He sincerely believes that salvation is, and can be, only of grace, through

faith in Christ. Intelligently and devoutly, with full consent, he responds to all I say when I tell him of the worthlessness of all creature righteousness, and tell him also of the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. But alas ! he complains it is to him like the cup of Tantalus, ever near to his burning lips, and yet ever escaping his grasp. It is in vain that I represent to him, however affectionately, the entire and absolute freeness of the gospel offer, the ample warrant he has for taking Christ and taking comfort in Christ, the infallible certainty and wide sweep of that gracious promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Thou art perishing, I cry ; thou art lost. But once win Christ, and all is well. I see it, I feel it : he answers ; but, woe is me ! I cannot.

Weary of expostulation, argument, entreaty,—sick of the task of meeting in detail the endless difficulties and objections he conjures up, I turn upon him with the abrupt question, Are you willing to have this Christ ? Honestly, do you desire him ? For may not this depression really cover either an indolent and dilettante sort of spiritualism, treating the most solemn realities of eternity as if they were merely sentimental miseries ; or a morbid fondness for being melancholy, and being sympathised with as melancholy ; or a secret reluctance manfully to face and grapple with some sacrifice of self-esteem or self-indulgence felt to be inevitable if Christ is to be won ? Ah ! it will not do to be for ever treating unbelief, even when it takes the guise of most earnest spiritual soul-exercise and soul concern, as a misfortune, a calamity ; to be sympathising with it, and almost apologising for it. I cannot give you credit for counting Christ gain ; at all events, I cannot give you credit for that conviction being very genuine and deep, unless you show that you really covet him as gain by being willing and con-

senting to have him. I must remind you that convictions, however genuine and deep in the conscience and the understanding, are not saving unless there goes along with them the willing heart.

This renewing of your will, indeed, is the main part, the very essence, of the Spirit's work in your conversion, your effectual calling. There may be a sense of sin and a knowledge of Christ. The sense of sin may be so poignant as to stir the soul's profoundest fountains of grief, and shame, and fear. The knowledge of Christ may be so clear and captivating as to prompt the feeling—"would he were mine; were he but mine, I would be blessed indeed." But all that, as you need to be continually told, is compatible with an unrenewed will, with the entire absence of any real and hearty willingness to have Christ as your gain. And oh! remember, brethren, that while the convinced conscience craves for Christ, and the enlightened understanding sees Christ, it is the willing heart that wins him.

Oh! make sure, then, of the willing heart, the willing mind. Wanting that, you may have much spiritual exercise about sin and about Christ all in vain. Having that, even though your sense of sin may as yet be very inadequate, and your acquaintance with Christ very imperfect, still it is enough. Let the stress of your concern as regards your spiritual state be all in the direction of the willing mind, the willing heart. Lay yourselves out for that. Let the desire of your souls be towards Christ. Earnestly seek Christ. Think not that he is to be won unsought. Think not that he is to come in some mysterious manner into your arms, merely because you feel your need of him and see how good a thing it would be for you to have him. If he is worth the winning, he is worth the seeking. Therefore seek ye the Lord. Seek with the earnestness of the merchantman seeking

goodly pearls. Seek with the importunity of the woman who would take no denial. Seek with the perseverance of the widow who would give the judge no rest. Seek, and seek on till you find.

Above all, seek with the sincerity of a perfect willingness to comply with all the terms on which the finding of Christ depends ; a willingness to count all things but loss for Christ ; a willingness to have no other righteousness but Christ, no other strength but Christ, no other life but Christ, no other portion but Christ ; a willingness to bear the reproach of Christ, to take up the cross of Christ, to fill up in your bodies the measure of the suffering of Christ ; a willingness to fall in, absolutely and without reserve, with the plan and purpose of the Father that the undivided glory of your salvation should belong to Christ, that you should be nothing, and Christ should be all in all. Seek ye the Lord thus as your gain. Covet, desire, seek him, in such a spirit as this. Instead of ever complaining that you cannot get him, instead of always condoling with yourselves, and asking all men to condole with you, because your case, as you choose to imagine, is not with sufficient personality and particularity met and provided for, be up and doing. Gird up the loins of your minds ; go out of yourselves in search of Christ. Search for him in the word. Search for him in the gospel. Search for him in ordinances. Search for him by prayer. Search for him as willing, anxious to find him. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee." "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." "Seek, and ye shall find."

3. For now Christ is appropriated as gain. "He that seeketh findeth." He who seeks Christ, willing, just as he is, to have Christ just as *he* is, finds him, and in finding Christ,

appropriates him, and in appropriating Christ, feels him to be gain. It is for this, and nothing short of this, that you are asked to count all things but loss that you may thus win Christ. It would be a poor gospel that called you to renounce all your confidence in the flesh, to let go those palpable grounds of trust which might be felt to give you some standing before God, and did not also provide for your winning Christ in the full sense of your being enabled, not merely to count him to be gain, nor merely to covet and seek him as gain, but to appropriate him to yourselves as gain, actually to win him as your own.

Yes ; it is that I may win Christ that I am to part with everything else. Surely, therefore, if I am not to make a foolish bargain, an unprofitable exchange, Christ may be won.

Do you ask how ? I reply, by faith, by faith alone ; faith making Christ mine, as thoroughly, personally, consciously mine, as those other things were mine. These things were at all events really in my possession, actually mine. As to my being "circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee" (ver. 5) ; as to all these qualifications there could be no room for doubting that they really belonged to me. There could be no question as to their being mine. But now I am to discard them all. And for what ? for whom ? For Christ. But not surely for the mere knowledge of Christ, however excellent ; not for the mere sense of my need of Christ ; not for a continual seeking of Christ. No ; but for Christ himself ; for Christ found, attained, appropriated as mine ; that I may win Christ.

Ah ! if Christ were not thus to be won, it were better for me to keep by those old, original grounds of confidence, which at least have this recommendation, that they can be sensibly apprehended, estimated, weighed, and measured. The good

upon me, in me, about me, in which I used to trust, is mine ; undeniably mine. I can recognise, touch, and handle it as mine. And if I am to let it all go for the sake of another good, the good that is in Christ, the good that Christ is, on the mere chance of that good being some time and some way, I know not when or how, mine ; I commit myself to a most intolerable experience of suspense and hazard. I am willing to let all go. I do in fact let all go. But it is that I may win Christ ; that I may really get hold of him ; that I may have him as mine.

But how ? you ask again. Again I answer, by faith ; by faith alone. The thing cannot be made plainer to you by definition or description. If there be any remaining difficulty, it must be removed by experiment. "Seek, and ye shall find." Seek and win Christ. Believe and be saved. Believe and live.

Nay, but still you ask, how shall I know that I have appropriated, or am appropriating, Christ ? How shall I know that I have won, or that I am winning, Christ as mine ? That, I rejoin, is not now the question. I am not speaking of that reflex assurance of faith which concludes, on credible evidence, that my belief is genuine, and that therefore Christ is mine. I speak of the direct, immediate, simple, and straightforward acting of faith ; faith dealing not with itself but with its object ; dealing with Christ ; with Christ offered in the gospel ; with Christ freely given by the Father ; Christ commended by the Spirit ; Christ owned by your own conscience ; Christ welcomed into your very heart. Oh ! be sure you have not far to seek. You have not long to wait.

This Christ whom you now reckon to be the only gain ; this Christ whom you now really covet and would fain grasp as all your gain ; this Christ is yours ; yours freely, immediately ; yours now for the taking. You win Christ. It is

his own wish ; it is his Father's good pleasure ; it is the aim of his Spirit's coming that you should win him. " Be not faithless, therefore, but believing." Raise not questions. Ask not for signs. Say not that if you saw and felt the scars you would believe. Lift up the eye of faith. Behold and see. Before you, in immediate contact with you, face to face, is the crucified one. " Take me," he cries ; " my birth, my circumcision, my baptism, my obedience, my sufferings, my death, my resurrection, my life, my grace, my glory ;—myself. Take me as an equivalent, far more than an equivalent, for all that you ever thought you might lean on or trust in before God. Come, O doubter, see and feel my wounds ; wounds borne for such as thou art, for thee thyself, thy very self." Wilt thou not fall down before him, absolutely unable to hold out any longer against such love ? Wilt thou not say unto him, " My Lord, and my God !"

4. You win Christ so as to enjoy him as gain. You win him ; not as the miser hoards his wealth, to keep it ; not as the spendthrift gets his property, to waste it. Christ is gain to you, not for show and semblance, for name and reputation merely. He is yours for profitable use ; for peace, contentment, honour, happiness, and whatever else is comprehended in your standing right with God. Be well assured that nothing short of your thus winning Christ, in the full sense of your not merely appropriating him as gain, but using and enjoying him as gain, will reconcile you to the sacrifice you have to make of your self-reliance and self-esteem, or enable you fully and finally to make it. But what a rich compensation for all you have to give up is your thus winning Christ, so winning him as to have, to use, to enjoy him !

To win Christ ! What a prize is this ! It is to win a friend, a brother ; a friend who lays down his life for me ; a brother who shares with me all the love with which his

Father loveth him, and all the glory which his Father giveth him. To win Christ ! It is to win an inexhaustible fulness of grace and truth ; a fountain of atoning blood ever freshly flowing ; an unction of the Holy Ghost, shedding light on all things, breathing love into all things. Oh ! it is a great word this : it is a great thing to win Christ, to get him, to use him, to enjoy him, as really gain to me.

That I may win Christ ! Brethren beloved, it is a real attainment ; it is a positive gain. It is not a bare negation ; a painful exercise of self-denial ; the enforced renunciation of self-righteousness ; the mere emptying myself, or suffering myself to be beggared of all I used to lean on and look to and trust in. That is not Christianity : it is not the doctrine of Christ or the experience of the Christian. The gospel calls me not to famine but to fulness, when it calls me to win Christ. I am to feed on Christ. I am to grow up into Christ. I am to eat his very flesh and drink his very blood. I am to win him, so as to find his flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood to be drink indeed.

Who is he who would persuade me to change my whole natural habit of thought, my whole natural course of life, to forsake the old refuges, the trees of the garden, to cast off the old coverings, the fig-leaves, and to come forth, naked, shivering, shuddering, a guilty soul confronting an angry God ? And what has he to give me to replace the confidence I have lost ? Himself. I may win him. He will be to me instead of all things else. Take me, he cries, take me as a substitute, for whatever you are required to part with. Prove me. See if I am not a rich equivalent for all. My righteousness, the righteousness of the slain Lamb, is better for you than any apron of your own devising. I am a better hiding-place than the best trees of Eden's garden. In me are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ; unsearchable

riches are mine. The Father's favour is mine for you ; the Father's love and liberality ; the Father's heavenly inheritance. I am myself the Father's gift to you. I ask you to make no sacrifice, without offering to you ample compensation. I call on you to count all things but loss ; but it is that you may win me. And is not that enough ? Yes, Lord, for " whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever " (Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26).

II. To be found in Christ is the fitting sequel of winning Christ. It is the double fruit, the twofold good, of winning Christ. I am found in Christ.

For defence, I am to be found in Christ ; that I may meet every adversary ; that I may silence every answer. For that I can do now, far otherwise than I used to do before. Once I had nothing better to present than my own righteousness. With that I tried to quench the fiery darts of the adversary ; thinking that I might thrust in some goodness of my own to avert the stroke, at whatever point he might assail. Now I have always to present on every side an impregnable front. I have a righteousness, not my own, but wholly divine, to plead in every emergency ; against every adversary who would assail or question my standing, I have the apostle's challenge ; " it is God that justifieth : who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again. " " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? "

But I am to win Christ, so as to be found in him, not merely to meet and answer every assault of the accusing adversary, but to meet also and obey the high calling of God in Christ. For winning Christ, and being found in him, I

would press on. As one with him, I would now know him as he is ; I would know more of his mind, and know it with more sympathy of my mind with his. I would know more of his mind, in his passing through my sufferings, which he made his, to his glory, which he makes mine ; through death to life. Yes ! If I am found in Christ, it is that I may die with him into sin, and live with him unto righteousness, and unto God. It is that I may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is that in him I may go on to perfection.

Thus to win Christ and be found in him, how blessed ! “To be found in him”—when? Now—O my brother ! most emphatically now. Not an hour, not a moment, to be lost ! Now is the accepted time ; now, and only now !

When? does one ask again? when but always, in all circumstances, evermore? When enemies reproach you, when your heart misgives you, when doubts arise within, and dark questionings invade your peace ; when difficulties are started, which you cannot solve, and the ground seems giving way under your feet : oh to be found in Christ then, as little children nestling in his bosom, not careful to deal with every foe, or with any fear, content to look up into his loving face, and say, Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me ! To be found in Christ, when hell threatens and all its pains take hold on you ; in Christ, who himself descended thither, and spoiled all its principalities on his cross : to be found in Christ when heaven opens, that you may sit with him in the heavenly places ; to be found in Christ when earth vexes, and all on earth is felt to be vanity, still able to say, If I have nothing else worth living for, to me to live is Christ : to be found in Christ, when duty calls, in him who said, “ I must be about my Father’s business :” to be found in Christ, when sin besets, in him who said, “ Get thee behind me Satan :” to be

found in Christ when sorrow comes, in him who wept at Bethany, and as he went on his way to Calvary, could still say, "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" to be found in Christ in the hour of death, in him who cried, "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit!" to be found in Christ in the day of doom, in him to whom, at his own bar, you may lift the living, trusting voice, "Thou hast answered, Lord, for me!"

To be found in Christ! When? does one still ask? When, but through endless ages, in those realms of unfading beauty and bliss, where all the family of God, angels and men together, are gathered into one in Christ? Then shall ye be found in Christ, associated for ever with all the holy ones; found in Christ, sharing his glory and his joy, to the praise of God the Father, world without end. Amen.

And what of you, who in death, on the judgment day, throughout eternity, are not found in Christ? What is to become of you, when, too late, the discovery flashes upon you that you have not won Christ, and are not to be found in him? Where are you to be found? In whom? Lying in the wicked one, doomed to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; none to answer for you then; hell opening its wide jaws to receive you.

Oh! ye Christless, Godless men! Is it not high time for you to awake out of sleep? You may have some sort of goodness, in which you think you may perhaps wrap yourselves in the trying hour. You may lean on a name, a profession, a creed, a form; or on some amiable qualities you seem to possess, some decent virtues you cultivate, some pious deeds you do. But will these be gain to you in the day when the secrets of all hearts are revealed, and your deep alienation from God, amid them all, is relentlessly laid bare? What a discovery to make then, that they are loss,

that they are all dung ! to discover that then ; when there is no Christ to be won, and all hope of your being found in him is gone for ever ! Oh ! rather let the discovery be made to you now by the Holy Ghost, and acquiesced in by you, in your quickened conscience and broken heart. “ Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found.”

XIII.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD.

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”—2 TIMOTHY ii. 19.

THE scene here is one of destruction and desolation. On all sides houses are shaken and overturned. The houses are individuals or communities professing to believe the gospel. The faith of some, of several, of many diversely minded and diversely influenced, is overthrown. But amid the storm and havoc, the wreck and ruin occasioned by false principles issuing in corrupt practice, there is a building which standeth sure. It is the foundation of God. It is founded and built on the rock, which is God the Son; and it is founded and built thereon by God, the Holy Ghost, according to the purpose of God the Father. Thus, on a threefold warrant, it is entitled to be called the foundation of God; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Now it may be the church collective of which this is said, the church which has the Lord's promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. But it may also be the individual believer that is intended; for the collective church and the individual believer are on the same footing. For my present purpose I take the text in this latter view, and hold it to be descriptive of the Christian man, continuing steadfast and firm in his faith amid many

surrounding instances of backsliding and apostasy. He is a tower, or temple, or building of some sort standing sure ; being the foundation of God. And in token of that security he is sealed. He is doubly sealed ; sealed on both sides. Like a column standing between heaven and earth, sealed on either side so that it cannot be moved ; he is sealed both heavenwards and earthwards. Heavenward, the seal has impressed on him the legend, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Earthward, the writing is "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

I. "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

By "the Lord" I understand the Lord Jesus Christ. It was an early usage to give him that simple title. "It is the Lord," says John to Peter, recognising their common Master after his resurrection. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ;" the day of the Lord Jesus. He is the Lord. This Lord knoweth them that are his.

What his knowing them means and implies may be best perhaps brought out by looking at some of the marks or signs by which he may be supposed to know them, the grounds of his knowing them as his own. These are of two sorts : marks or signs bearing upon his interest or right of property in them, the claim which he has upon them ; and marks or signs bearing more directly on their interest or right of property in him, the claim which he graciously acknowledges them to have upon him. He knows them as his, by his ownership of them ; and by their ownership of him.

The Lord knoweth them that are his by signs or marks or tokens bearing on his interest or right of property in them, his ownership of them.

Thus, he knows them as given to him by the Father from before all worlds, in the everlasting covenant. To this

ground of his knowledge of them he frequently refers, with deep and earnest feeling. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me ; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." So he speaks in the view of prevailing unbelief respecting him. Multitudes may reject and despise him. But not one of those given to him by the Father will refuse to come to him. And not one of those who so come to him, being given to him by the Father, will he in any wise cast out. The main stress of his intercessory prayer (John xvii.) is laid on this consideration, his knowing them that are his, as given to them by the Father. "Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee : as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me." "I pray for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine. And all mine are thine." "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am " (vers. 2, 6, 9-11, 24).

The Lord knoweth them that are his as redeemed by him. "I know my sheep." "I lay down my life for them" (John x. 14, 15). This ground of knowledge, especially in connection with the former, the Lord brings forward very touchingly and tenderly, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them"—know them as the Good Shepherd, giving my life for them,—“and they follow me” (vers. 28, 29). By his having them, every one of them, in his mind and in his heart as he hung on the accursed tree, by his tasting death for every one of them, "the Lord knoweth them that are his."

He knows them that are his, not merely by his Father's giving them to him, and his own work for them, but by the Spirit's work in them also. So he knows them when

he says of the Spirit, "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." Otherwise he knows them not, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." By their having his Spirit, the Spirit testifying of him, the Lord knoweth them that are his. He knows them as sealed for his by the Holy Ghost, renewed after his likeness, conformed to his image, receiving the adoption of sons, in and with himself, and the spirit of adoption, whereby in and with himself they cry, Abba, Father.

These grounds of knowledge, these proofs and tokens of his interest and right of property in them, by which the Lord knows his own, are surely of deep import to you. And if, as to the first two, you may allege that they lie beyond your observation and your consciousness, you cannot say that of the last. True, you cannot search the secret counsels of heaven to find your name written in the Lamb's book of life among the countless number of the elect given to him by the Father from before all worlds. True also, you cannot hope or aspire to behold the breastplate of the great High Priest at the altar of atonement, to ascertain if yours is among the names that are written there. But you can welcome into your souls the blessed Spirit as he comes to reveal Christ in you, to form Christ in you the hope of glory. You may beware of grieving or vexing him when he becomes an inmate and indweller with you. You may stir up the gift that is in you, and make full proof of his gracious ministry, when he moves you to embrace the Lord Christ as freely given to you in the gospel, to be no more faithless, but believing, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of him whom he thus delights to glorify. So, in the simple and continued exercise of a child-like appropriating faith in Christ, you may more and more thoroughly attain, every one of you, to the assurance of his loving you and giving himself for you. And recognising in all this

sovereign electing love, as the only possible explanation of what is so marvellous in your eyes,—that such an one as you should be saved in such a way,—you reach the fountain-head of this whole flood of grace, and repose in the eternal purpose of the Father ordaining to glory his only-begotten Son, and for that end ordaining you to be conformed to his image, that he may be the first-born among many brethren. Well therefore may you be exhorted to “give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

The other class of marks or tokens by which the Lord knoweth them that are his, those bearing upon their interest or right of property in him, do unquestionably come within the range and sphere of your consciousness and experience. They are, in fact, in the main, but an expansion, or unfolding, of the last of the three former ones, the work of the Spirit making you Christ's, and Christ yours, and keeping you evermore in this blessed unity.

The Lord knoweth them that are his, by the need they have of him. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Mark ii. 17). “I am poor and needy; but the Lord thinketh upon me.” He knows me by my need of him. And not merely generally by my need of him in common with all the lost; but particularly and individually; by my special and personal need of him at every moment of my life. He knows me by my own individual case, my own individual experience, as needing him. So he knoweth them that are his separately; each one of them apart from all the rest; according to each one's separate need. So he knew the helpless cripple at Bethesda, as needing the cure to be brought to him, since he could not get to the cure. So he knew the woman of Samaria when he spoke to her what was so thoroughly a word in season; a word at once awakening her, and probing

her conscience to the quick, that the living and cleansing water might be the more welcome. Each one apart he knows by his special need of him, as if it were that need that he came specially to meet.

The Lord knoweth them that are his by the trust they put in him. "The Lord is good ; he knoweth them that trust in him" (Nahum i. 7). So he knew the Syrophœnician woman, who was so importunate with him on behalf of her daughter that she would take no denial, and would even plead as a dog ; claiming no right to the children's table, but only to the crumbs that fell from it. He knew her by the believing importunity that would not let him go, but, in spite of seeming rejection and reproach, held him fast until he blessed her. "O woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." So he knew that other woman, who in her extremity could but venture to press in among the crowd, and get so near as to touch the hem of his garment. By the trust she put in him he knew her as his. For when, at his call, the woman, fearing and trembling, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth, he said unto her, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

The Lord knoweth them that are his by the love they bear to him. So he knew the woman who was a sinner, and who, hearing of his sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and washed his feet with her tears, wiping them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. She loveth, is his acknowledgment, his testimony. She loveth me much. And I may not disown her love. For she loveth me much, as receiving, from me and through me and in me, much forgiveness. By the love she bears to me, on that account and on that ground I know her as one that is mine.

The Lord knoweth them that are his by the work they do for him. Be that work ever so little ; let it be but the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, it shall in no wise lose its reward. He knew thus as his own the woman who, in the house of Simon the leper, poured on his head ointment of spikenard, very precious, when he vindicated her against the murmurs of the gainsayers that stood by : “ She hath done what she could. She hath wrought a good work on me.” In whatever sphere, he knows them that are his, as working for him ; as his fellow-workers. As the Father hath sent him into the world, even so he sendeth them, to witness and to work for him. And he says to every one of them, as he said to the Asiatic churches, “ I know thy works,” and by thy works I know thee as mine. When thou givest a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple ; when thou speakest a word in season to him that is weary ; when thou visitest the fatherless and widows in their affliction ; the Lord knows thee as his, as he will acknowledge thee in the day when thou shalt hear these blessed words, “ Inasmuch as thou didst it to the least of these my brethren, thou didst it to me.”

The Lord knoweth them that are his by their suffering for and with him. He suffers along with them ; for in all their affliction he is afflicted. When they go forth unto him without the gate, bearing his reproach ; when they forsake all and follow him ; when they suffer loss for his sake ; when they endure hardships as his good soldiers ; when they bear the common ills of life as his burden ; when they are well-nigh fainting under the heavy load ; the Lord knows them as his. By their tears which he puts into his bottle ; by the wounds and scars of their sore strife with evil ; by their unutterable groanings, which his Spirit turns into prayers, the Lord knoweth them that are his.

The Lord knoweth them that are his as waiting for him. He knows them as his own, when in answer to his announcement, "Behold I come quickly," he hears them murmuring, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." He knows them as his own by their loving his appearing and longing to be with him. He knows them as his own when he sees them, with loins girt and lamps burning, watching for his advent. He knows them as his own when, over the grave of freshly buried love, they lift the eye of resignation and of hope as they hear the gracious words, "Thy brother shall rise again;" and when, sorrowing for them that are asleep, they yet believe, and are comforted in believing, that "as Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Now, put together all these marks by which the Lord knoweth them that are his; their being the Father's gift to him, the purchase of his own blood, the sharers of his holy nature, through the Spirit that dwelt in him dwelling also in them; their sore need of him, their simple faith in him, their earnest love to him, their working for him, suffering with him, waiting his return; and say what must his thus knowing them mean? what must it imply and involve? Nay, rather, what will it not include of watchful care, tender pity, unwearied sympathy, unbounded beneficence and liberality and bountifulness?

The reply had better be left to every man's own heart. Only meditate and ponder well these manifold reasons of this wondrous knowledge, and seek to enter into them and apprehend them experimentally, with personal application to yourselves; grasp them, appropriate them, as the reasons of his knowing you as his own; and the fulness of the blessing of being so known by such an one as he is will more and more make itself felt.

In particular, as regards your steadfastness and persever-

ance, amid the shaking of men's faith and their falling away from the truth, for your safe preservation from backsliding, error, and apostasy, be ever cleaving to Christ as thus knowing you ; knowing thee, O poor trembling soul, silly, simple sheep as thou art ; knowing thee individually ; calling thee by thy name ; acquainted with all thy ways ; and, in spite of all thy frailties and all thy fears, still ever owning thee as his. He knows thee as his own, to keep thee by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. " Whosoever toucheth thee toucheth the apple of his eye." He knows thee as his own, to make all things work together for thy good. He knows thee as his property. Who can steal or force anything from him ? He knows thee as part of his very self, a member of his body, and who can dismember him ? He knows thee as thus his own, and can no more deny thee than he can deny himself. " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? She may forget ; yet will not he forget thee ; he hath graven thee on the palms of his hands." Thou art his, and he knows thee as his. Is not that enough for thee ?

The Lord knoweth them that are really his ; not them that only appear or profess to be his ; for there are many that say to him, " Lord, Lord," to whom he will profess, " I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity." But those that are truly his, however obscure and despised, the Lord knoweth. The world may not know them ; they may scarcely even know themselves ; but the Lord knoweth them, though all else disown them.

II. " Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

1. Naming the name of Christ comes before departing from iniquity. This is the evangelical arrangement. And it is the only one that can meet the sinner's case. He may

not think so naturally. For his idea of departing from iniquity is one that he can realise apart from Christ. It is mere outward reformation ; the renouncing of some old customs and old companionships ; the adoption of a decent mode of life. He may include in his notion a little more. He may admit that the change implies some relentings and regrets ; some compunctious visitations and feelings ; some pangs of remorse. But that is all. And if that were all, there need be no reason for placing the naming of the name of Christ first.

But to you who know what departing from iniquity really means ; to you who are in earnest about departing from iniquity ; to you who appreciate somewhat of the beauty of holiness, and who have some sense and experience of the power of indwelling sin ; to you who have truly engaged in the task of grappling with corruption at its source, in the inner man, and aiming to be holy, as God is holy ; to you it must surely be good news to be told that your departing from iniquity is not in any sense a preliminary to your naming the name of Christ.

No! Your naming the name of Christ is the first thing. Come, then, and name that name as you are ; not as departing from iniquity ; but as utterly unable to do more than cry, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" Come, with iniquity still cleaving to you ; come in your helplessness ; come as you are. Do not wait till you can say or think that you have less sin to be answered for, or are somehow more free from sin's guilt and pollution. I give you credit for a desire to depart from all iniquity. I assume your earnestness about your personal sanctification. I take for granted that you care, not merely for forgiveness and safety, but also, and still more, for holiness ; that you desire not merely to be let off from punish-

ment, but to be made pure and loving and Godlike. And I regard you as so much concerned about that as to find in it a difficulty about your instantly closing with the gospel offer, and naming the name of Christ.

You have somehow the idea that you must begin at least your departing from iniquity before you venture on the liberty of confidently and comfortably naming the name of Christ. But read the legend aright. Take in the whole fulness of the gospel of Christ. Do not imagine that if you could say or feel that you were departing from iniquity, you would have more boldness in naming the name of Christ. Do not wait for that ; it is waiting till the stream run dry. For your departing from iniquity must be at the source, the fountain, the spring, of the iniquity that is in you. And that is your departure from the living God. Your first step, therefore, in departing from iniquity must be a return from your departure from the living God. It must be your reconciliation to him, your being brought nigh unto him, through your naming the name of Christ. Is not this a blessed reading of the seal on the earthward, sinward side ; the side of the sin-stricken soul ?

Thou tempest-tossed struggler with the horrid sea of outward and inward iniquity ; thou who art hesitating and hanging back, as if it would be presumption in thee to name the name of Christ till thou hadst made some head against the stream ; come and read this legend. First name the name of Christ. Name that name now. Name it, plead it, before and in order to your departing from iniquity. Name it as you are ; Jesus ; so called because he " saves his people from their sins."

2. Naming the name of Christ is to be followed by departing from iniquity : and that not only in the form of a natural and necessary consequence to be anticipated,

but in that of obedience to a peremptory command. It is not said, He that nameth the name of Christ may be expected, or will be inclined, or must be moved by a divine impulse, to depart from iniquity. But it is expressly put, as an authoritative and urgent precept. "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Here also we see the grace of the gospel. It is indeed true, that naming the name of Christ, believing on him, looking to him, embracing him, does naturally and necessarily lead to departing from iniquity ; that the two things are inseparable ; that faith in Jesus carries in it the principle of perfect purity as well as peace. And it is good to tell the anxious soul, the soul anxious, not for safety merely, but for holiness, that his naming the name of Christ now, and just as he is, will assuredly be his best and only means of departing from iniquity. But it may be well to prepare him for a possible disappointment ; at least in the first outset of his Christian experience.

Ah ! when I first cast my eye on the cross of Christ, and venture to name his name ; when, the Spirit of grace and supplication being poured upon me, I look on him whom I have pierced, and, trembling, regard him as pierced for me ; when I see him bearing my sin, and bearing it all away ; when I gaze on his agony, and apprehend my share in its cause and in its fruit ; I feel as if I could never any more have any taste for the accursed thing which crucified my Lord ; as if nothing could ever tempt me to traffic with the vice or the vanity of the world which rejected him ; as if spontaneously, and by the mere force of the emotions that now fill my soul, I must without effort, and without purpose almost, be led on in the way of abhorrence of all that is evil, and love of all that is holy and good. Alas ! alas ! Too

soon I find that the old man is too powerful for the new ; that it is an upward walk I have to tread ; that I have to make head against a strong current, apt to become a sweeping torrent. Departing from iniquity, in the sense in which I now understand and care for that attainment, does not come so spontaneously as I had expected, out of naming the name of Christ. Growth in holiness is, I begin to find, no play or pastime of a summer day. The purifying of the heart through faith is no process of mere unconscious progress.

Surely it is a relief and comfort to me, in such circumstances, to know that it never was meant to be so. It is good for me to have the process of my personal sanctification put upon the footing, not of a corollary or consequence, in the nature of things, from my believing in Christ for the saving of my soul, but of a business with which I have to concern myself, as if it were all in my hands ; my life business, in short ; that I am not to wait passively and quietly as if the work would go on without my co-operation, and almost without my consciousness ; that, in a word, I have to work out my own salvation.

3. Naming the name of Christ and departing from iniquity thus go together. They are not really twain, but one. There is not first a naming of the name of Christ, as if it were an act or a transaction to be completed at once, and so disposed of and set aside ; and then thereafter a departing from iniquity, as its fitting consequence and commanded sequel. The two things cannot be thus separated. For, in truth, naming the name of Christ involves departing from iniquity ; and departing from iniquity is possible only by naming the name of Christ. The one cannot be without the other. In the very first instant of your naming the name of Christ there is departing from iniquity. And

ever afterwards your continued departing from iniquity is simply a continued naming of the name of Christ. The connection is close and indissoluble ; every earnest and growing Christian feels it to be so.

Call to mind the past ; your first naming the name of Christ with anything like realising and appropriating faith,—your first looking to him and embracing him as not only the Saviour of sinners, but your own Saviour, loving you and giving himself for you. Was there not, then, in that simple act or exercise of faith, a departing from iniquity ? You turned your back on sin when you turned your face to the cross. Or rather, you turned your face to sin as seen in the cross ; and as it crucified Christ, it crucified you : so that, in your very naming the name of Christ at first, there was a departing from iniquity.

And consider the present. What is your experience now if you are really in earnest in the work of your personal and progressive sanctification ? How do you deal with any sin besetting you ? How, and how only, can you deal with it hopefully and successfully ? Is it by grappling with it directly ? Is it by meeting it face to face in a hand-to-hand encounter ? Is it not rather always by naming the name of Christ ? by looking to him, as at the first ? looking to him as bearing that very sin ? looking to him as, in the bearing of that sin, loving you and giving himself for you ?

Did not Paul experimentally prove this to be the rule and law of his deliverance from evil, and his consequent progress in holiness, when, under the sore, sad pressure of indwelling corruption, he said first, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” and then, “ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” With him there was no departing from iniquity excepting only in the naming of the name of Christ. It was always

with him a naming of that name. So let it be with you. Let it be as naming the name of Christ that you seek to depart from iniquity. Deal not so much with the iniquity from which you would depart, rather look upon it as dealt with and disposed of by Christ. Deal with Christ. Name his name. Cleave to him. Abide in him. So shall your holiness be not a negative but a positive attainment, and your departing from iniquity real and sure when thus it is an earnest naming of the name of Christ.

XIV.

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.

“ These . . . confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”—HEBREWS XI. 13.

THIS is a confession which all the patriarchs made ; if not in words, more emphatically in deeds. We find it expressly made on five occasions in the Old Testament. The five, however, may be classified under two heads.

Under the first head there are two ; historical, and as it were, doctrinal. 1. Abraham uses this language, in conferring with the sons of Heth about the burial of Sarah, “ I am a stranger and a sojourner with you ; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight” (Gen. xxiii. 4). 2. The Lord himself uses it in speaking of the tenure in which Israel held the land of promise, “ The land shall not be sold for ever ; for the land is mine ; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me” (Lev. xxv. 23).

Under the second head there are three instances, more devotional and practical. David uses the expression ; 1. As bearing on liberal giving to the Lord,—“ Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? For all things come of thee ; and of thine own have we given thee : for we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding” (1 Chron. xxix. 14, 15) ; 2. As bearing on the tears which a sense of

the world's vanity and sin causes to flow, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry. Hold not thy peace at my tears. For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Ps. xxxix. 12); 3. As bearing on spiritual longing for the knowledge of God and his commandments, "I am a stranger in the earth. Hide not thy commandments from me" (Ps. cxix. 19).

I. The first two instances of this confession occur in historical narratives, and may be considered by themselves.

1. Abraham says to the sons of Heth: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Gen. xxiii. 4). I do not dwell upon this most interesting and pathetic picture. The bereaved old man coming out from his lonely chamber, to face, as he expects, an unsympathising group of strangers; the sudden surprise of finding them to be kind and pitying friends; the grand and stately interchange of compliments; the generous offer; the courteous declination; the grace of the final treaty of love, rather than of business; all so original in its character, and so deeply natural too; might tempt one to enlarge. I rather proceed, however, at once to make some practical use of the appeal, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

You are alone, and would fain be let alone, in your grief. You care not for companionship; you shrink from it. "Leave me to myself," may be your instinctive cry. "Only give me liberty in quietness to bury my dead. Earth may have many things attractive to you: for me, it can furnish only one thing I care for; a grave for my dead." This may be a morbid frame; and it may have a fascination for the mourner; and such a fascination as is apt to grow. It may become the luxury of woe; and, like all luxury, it will enervate and enslave. It is to be resisted in its beginning. For it has

no truth in it, no charity, no faith. Are you to bid all the world stand still, or stand aside, that you may bury your dead? Thronged as it is with men and women, as sensitive as you can be to all its pains; and having tenfold more of its pains to bear, is it a world from which you may seclude yourself as if in the shelter of some solitary cell, to muse and mourn alone? No, brother! whatever may be your grief; say not in any such spirit to your fellows, I am a stranger. Learn a better lesson. You may feel, when the desire of your eyes is taken away, as if you had nothing left on earth to live for, save only the burying of your dead. But it is not so. As a lover of men, you have much to live for; to do good as you have opportunity. As a lover of Christ, you have more; for to you to live is Christ.

In this spirit, you may well and warrantably use the language of the Patriarch; with fullest fellowship and sympathy, "Have pity upon me, O my friends!" "You may have been wont to regard me simply as a stranger; separated from you; moving in a different sphere, and following different ways. You may have seen perhaps, with some not unnatural grudge, my prosperous state; thinking it hard that such an uninvited intruder into your country should possess such wealth in flocks and herds: or the simple worship of my household may have provoked your indignation or contempt. I was not one of you. You saw me as a stranger; as one whom you did not understand, and could not altogether like. But see me now, a stricken mourner, a desolate old man, fain to come to you and ask from you a grave in which to bury my dead." There is that in sorrow which makes men kind; which makes them kin. How precious, in this view, may a season of distress be to one labouring among his neighbours on behalf of Christ! You hear of distress in some home within your beat; a sick child, a dying spouse, a mourning Rachel, a weeping Mary, an old

man seeking a grave for his dead. You hasten your visit now ; praying for and looking for a door of entrance, through softened broken hearts ; hearts shut closely hitherto. Or, you have yourself been called to mourn and weep. You go your customary rounds, with furrows in your cheeks, and traces of tears in your eye ; telling, too sadly, of your caring for nothing but a grave to bury your dead. Your very grief wins for you a kindly response. Your faltering voice goes home as never loudest warning did before. These sympathisers feel that you are as they are. They will listen to you when you speak of something else than the burying of your dead ; and something better for them. What is it to be ?

“I am a stranger and a sojourner with you.” So says the bereaved old man. “I am content to be so. I can wander up and down without a resting-place. The dead alone need a resting-place. Give me a grave for my dead. And you, whose guest I am, with whom as a stranger I am, and a sojourner, who seem to hold the country by a surer tenure than mine,—wherein are you better than I ? I need but a grave to bury my dead ! And what, after all, is your need ? Death enters your palace, as it enters my hut. What is there then between us ? What can either of us speak about or think about, but only the grave in which we are to bury our dead ? Surely this makes us one. I may be apparently more of a stranger on the earth than you ; my possessions less secure than yours ; my fragile remnant of life more like a pilgrimage than your robust health. But, brother, when you and I come to talk together of a place to bury our dead, we are strangers to one another no more ; we are sojourners with one another no more. We are strangers and sojourners alike in a land that is not ours, but the Lord’s. And we look for a better country, where we may be all at home together with the Lord. Together, therefore, let us leave the earth to our buried dead. And for what remains

of our wandering here, let us together set our faces to seek a heritage where none of us shall be strangers or sojourners any more ; where the risen dead and the living changed shall be for ever with the Lord, in his everlasting kingdom and glory."

2. The Lord says to Israel "The land is mine ; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev. xxv. 23). This may be regarded almost as a kind of rejoinder to the pathetic appeal which we have heard Abraham making to the sons of Heth. The land is here represented as having already passed into the hands of Israel ; as being in fact already as good as conquered. Abraham, in his natural seed or posterity, is now occupying its borders. Imagine, in that view, the words to be spoken to him personally. "Thou art here again, after a long interval, in the land where thou wast once a wanderer ; but now a wanderer no more ; a settled owner and proprietor ; lord of all the soil ; monarch of all thou canst survey. Then thou wast a stranger in it ; now thou art at home. Is it really so ? Art thou not a stranger still ? Then thou wast a stranger and sojourner with the sons of Heth. Now thou art a stranger and sojourner with me. Then thou didst acknowledge them to be thy hosts, and thyself to be their guest. Now thou art to feel that I am thy host, and thou art my guest. For the land is mine. Thou sojournest with me."

There is comfort in this thought applied retrospectively. Thou didst indeed then succeed in purchasing a few feet of ground, that thou mightest bury thy dead in no borrowed tomb, but in a sepulchre thou hadst by purchase made thine own. But, after all, it was in a land possessed by alien tribes, a land of strangers. Is it not a satisfaction, a solace, to reflect now that it was in a land which is the Lord's ? This comfort may be yours, believer. You too bury your dead in

a land that is the Lord's. And the land is the wide earth ; for the earth is the Lord's. Whenever you have to bury your dead, it is in a land of which the Lord says, It is mine. To leave loved remains on a foreign strand, slowly and sadly to lay down the brave where the foe is sullenly firing ; to lose the weary adventurer in the wild jungle, abandoned to his fate among its beasts of prey ; to cast with measured plunge into the deep sea the cold form which you prize above all its treasures : ah ! what a hard sore trial of love and faith. But courage. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof!" The fulness thereof ! It is filled with many things rich and rare. Among the rest it is filled with your buried dead. "The land is mine." The earth is mine, and its fulness ; the fulness of all the precious dust of all my saints ; their bodies so dear to me that I must needs see to their being kept in a land which is my own ; until I come to bring them from their resting-places, clothed with life and glory and beauty immortal, to carry them with me to a better, a heavenly home.

There is admonition also in the thought. "The land is mine ;" the land in which you have left your buried dead ! Yes ; the land is his. You are sojourners in it with him. He lodges and entertains you. And he does so in so liberal a spirit, and on so bountiful a scale, that you need to be continually reminded of his proprietorship and your dependence ; and to hear him saying The land is mine.

If you were hospitably received in some great and good man's house, seated at his table, and allowed the full range of his wide domains, you would not think of taking liberties as if all were your own. You would not injure his godly furniture, or waste his costly viands. You would not lounge too familiarly in his ample halls, or partake to excess of the luxuries of his table. You would be on your guard, lest you should abuse his hospitality. You would beware of encroach-

ing on his condescension. And you would pay him the decent compliment of showing how much you valued him and his company above all his goodly fare. Then again you would be careful not to set your heart too much upon your temporary residence, and its temporary entertainment. You would moderate your taste for the enjoyments and indulgences which are yours only for a brief and uncertain time ; allowed to you by him whose guest you are. And you would not think of giving away to foolish friends the goods stored up in his cellars ; or cutting down the timber of his woods for your own pleasure or aggrandisement.

This figure or parable may explain and enforce the right and safe way of using this world without abusing it. Let it be used under the constant pressure of the apostle's warning that the fashion of this world passes away, and also with a continual, realising sense of the Lord's appeal : " The world, the land, is mine ; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." Let that view of your position be thoroughly apprehended. It will at once determine the attitude you are to assume in the world.

As the Lord's guests you cannot be indifferent or stand neutral in the great strife that is going on in the land of which he says, It is mine. You must take a side. Nor can there be room for doubt what the side is to be. The buried bones of your pious dead, whose graves are all over the field of battle, forbid all hesitancy or indecision, all cowardice or compromise. The earth is indeed the Lord's. And it is ere long to be triumphantly vindicated and gloriously occupied as his. But meanwhile it is the Lord's, as a kind of debateable territory, every inch of which has to be fought for, to be won and kept as it were, by force of arms ; like the parcel of ground which Jacob bought, but which, nevertheless, his sons had to conquer by their swords and their bows. And it has in its bosom a countless multitude

of redeemed bodies, belonging to redeemed souls ; bodies now vile perhaps, but destined to be conformed to the Lord's own glorious body. You cannot be idle while the battle is raging that is to end in such a victory.

Two things in particular you must have much at heart. The first is to break every tie that ever bound you, or could bind you, to the usurper's service ; the service of the prince of this world. As sojourners with the rightful owner and Lord, you can have no dealings with him who rules only by force and by fraud. You need have none, for his power is broken and his lie exposed. He has nothing in you, either as an accuser or as a tyrant. You are not at his mercy, as if, being guilty, you needed to propitiate him. Your guilt is purged. There is now to you no condemnation ; to you who are in Christ, who answers for you in the judgment. You cannot now be brought under Satan's bondage ; for greater is he that is for you than all they that can be against you. You cannot now be blindfolded by the great deceiver. You know the truth, and the truth makes you free. Surely now you will not betray your host with whom you dwell, by shrinking from knowing his name and defending his cause, or by keeping up a treacherous correspondence with the enemy.

Rather, secondly, knowing his mind and heart, seeing how intensely he longs to clasp to his bosom, and welcome into his home, and entertain as his guests, each and all of those fighting in the rebel host, will you not be ever appealing to every one of them whom you meet with, every stranger wandering afar off, every unwary youth enlisting himself as a recruit ? Will you not affectionately plead and remonstrate ? Will you not reason with them thus ?—" War to the knife there must be between him who says, ' The land is mine,' and the usurping prince ; a war, in the end, of utter extermination. The rebel cities are doomed to be destroyed,

and all who are found in them must perish. As strangers and sojourners with God, we cannot but be loyal to him, and sympathising with him in his righteous purpose of avenging judgment; but in faithfulness and love to him and to you, we beseech you, in his name and on his behalf, not finally to commit yourselves. Come ye weary and heavy laden. Make trial of the hospitality we have by experience found to be so safe and so blessed. We were once as you are now; enemies to him with whom now we are sojourners. There was room enough in the inn for us. There is room enough for you. There was no one with whom the Son could be a sojourner when he was here. There was no room in the inn for him. He had not where to lay his head. But he himself tells us now that there is room,—he has made room,—in the inn for all of us. There is room for all of us in the tent pitched for our temporary shelter on the earth now; room for all of us in the abiding dwelling-place awaiting us in heaven hereafter; room for all of us in the heart and home of the everlasting Father.”

II. The three other instances of this confession of the text occur in devotional exercises, and they may be made to fit into one another.

1. “We are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers” (1 Chron. xxix. 15).

Here the thought “we are strangers before thee and sojourners,” is brought in to heighten and entrance the admiring and grateful joy with which David contemplates the amazing goodness of God, in permitting him and his people to do so much, to do anything, for the building of his house, for the glory of his name. What grace, what condescension, is there in this! The proprietor and Lord of all things enables and inclines us who are his guests, sojourning with him in the land that is his own, to offer as our gift what

already, as his property, belongs to him alone ; and most generously consents to accept the offering ! It is as if, while entertained by an open-hearted and open-handed landlord, owner of large domains, I were to take it into my fond and foolish conceit to approach him with some of the dainties of his own sumptuous board, or the ornamental furniture of his own splendid apartment, or the varied produce of his own garden and cultured grounds, gravely begging him to receive at my hands what I bring as an acknowledgment on my part of his bountiful hospitality. How preposterous a procedure ! one would be apt to say, and how utterly unreasonable, in such a case, to take credit to myself, or imagine that I am profiting or obliging him ! Does he not oblige me, and that most signally, when he entertains me in such a manner as to make a transaction of that sort possible, without its provoking indignation for its presumption, or ridicule for its folly ? For, in order to any such procedure, I must be a sojourner with my host, on a very peculiar footing, and after a very peculiar fashion. And so we are, as sojourners with the Lord. "The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Ps. cxv. 16). The land is his, and we are sojourners with him in it. But he so gives it to us, as to make us to feel that we have a right to regard it and use it freely as ours.

Living without God in the world, we are intruders, without any valid title to be where we are or to enjoy what we enjoy. Our place and our portion should be elsewhere. We are here by sufferance merely, tolerated by the Lord in the exercise of long-suffering for a season ; but not really welcome, acceptable, cherished guests and sojourners with him ; any more than were the Amorites of old, whom the land vomited out in the fulness of their iniquity. But believing, and becoming the true people and children of the Lord, we

have the earth given us to possess by another and better tenure. We receive a gracious covenant-right to the use and occupancy of it. All things, the world included, are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. He places all earth's resources at our disposal, and makes them all ours; so that now we are indeed in a position to "offer to him willingly and in the uprightness of our heart" (ver. 17), while yet we give him always all the praise. "O Lord, our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own" (ver. 16). "Of thine own have we given thee; for we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow."

2. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Ps. xxxix. 12).

This is your sad cry as you suffer under the inevitable evils of a stranger's lot, even though you may have the blessedness, in the land in which you are strangers, of being sojourners with him whose land it is. For, however hospitably he with whom you are sojourning may entertain you, it is still, as it were, within the precincts of an inn, nor can you expect to escape the vexations and troubles inseparable from that mode of accommodation. Then you must remember that the land, in which as strangers you are for the present entertained as sojourners, is the earth which has been cursed for your sin, and on which, with whatever mitigation, the sentence still lies. You may think it strange, perhaps hard, that you should be thus lodged, even temporarily; in the midst of creation's groans, mingling with your own. But, for wise ends, your gracious entertainer considers this to be right. And may you not always be appealing to him, and reminding him of your relation to

him? "I am thy guest ; a stranger sojourning with thee. I am a stranger ; a stranger here in the land, upon the earth, which has little tolerance for strangers. And I must keep myself a stranger ; a stranger from its works and ways ; more and more a stranger the more I grow in thy grace and in thy knowledge. Thou hast been thyself a stranger here. Thou hast experienced a stranger's treatment, a stranger's trials. Thou hast had personal and painful acquaintance with all that the world can do to those who will not be conformed to its fashion ; with all the void its vanity can cause ; and all the bitter grief its guilt can bring. Thou hast consented to be made sin, and made a curse, for such as I am, in the world. Now thou livest and reignest, head over all things for thy church. The land, the earth, is thine. And I am a sojourner with thee in it. My fathers were so ; and thou didst deliver them. Thou wilt not reject my prayer. Thou wilt not hold thy peace at my tears. Thou wilt spare me to recover strength."

3. "I am a stranger in the earth ; hide not thy commandments from me" (Ps. cxix. 19).

The point and pith of this prayer would seem to lie in the continual need which one who is a stranger on the earth has of communion with him whose guest he is ; with whom, as a stranger, he is a sojourner. In that character, as a stranger on the earth, I do not now desire to have more fellowship with the people of the land than is necessary for pious ends ; for the comely burial of my dead, or for the discharge of my duty of love to the living. I would rather converse with him who says, "The land is mine." And the medium of conversation with him is his word, or his commandments. His commandments ; his communications of whatever sort ; precepts, promises, histories, prophecies, warnings, encouragements ; all sayings of his, for they are all commandments ; I desire to use as means of real personal converse with him.

But I cannot do so unless he opens my eyes. Therefore, I pray, "Hide not thy commandments from me."

This prayer may fitly close the present discourse. It is suitable and relevant to all the views I have been asking you to take of your position and calling as strangers in the land, and sojourners in it with him who says, "The land is mine."

Are you summoned to the sad task of burying your dead; mourning beside the freshly opened grave; or dealing with tender memories of the past? Let not your relenting tenderness of feeling evaporate in vacant sighs, or passive melancholy, or soft, sentimental musings. Seek rather to turn it to wise practical account, that by the sadness of the countenance the heart may be made better. Instead of indulging vaguely in the luxury of woe, let your thoughts and feelings take some definite shape, and come to some precise point. For that end, use intelligently and devoutly the holy book. Let the word of God become the interpreter of his providence; suggesting the salutary hints, teaching the useful lessons, which the occasion is designed to impart. And ask the Lord's help in this, according to the prayer—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me."

Are you experiencing some new and fresh instance of the Lord's bountiful manner of entertaining you? Is he refreshing you in body and in soul; furnishing your table with more than ordinary dainties; anointing your head with the oil of unusual gladness; causing your cup very copiously to run over? Then, very specially, you need divine grace and guidance; and you do well to consult and converse with the Lord, that you may not abuse his hospitality, or find the full cup he puts into your hand too difficult to carry. Wait

therefore upon him in the study of his word, that you may learn how to use his gifts. Turn from the gifts to the Giver. Let him teach you how to walk with him still as strangers, and not make this world your home. "Lord, hide not thy commandments from me."

Are you moved to offer willingly to the Lord yourselves, your substance, your time, your talents, your energy and zeal? Are you anxious to be of service, to do good, to build his house, to advance his cause, to consider the poor as being his? You cannot trust yourselves, your own wisdom, or your own goodness. You are apt to err in devising ways and means of usefulness; or to grow weary in well-doing; or to become self-complacent and self-righteous, and therefore also careless and haughty. Be sure that you take the Lord along with you in all your plans and all your activities; in every visit you pay to the widow and the fatherless, and every mite you cast into any treasury. Seek counsel of God. Let him direct you. "Lord, I am a stranger in the earth." I have but a stranger's knowledge of what it needs, and of what is thy design or purpose at any given time or place regarding it. With the best intentions, I make mistakes and go wrong. And I am myself of the earth, earthy. Do thou direct me. Do thou teach me. "Hide not thy commandments from me."

Finally, are you depressed under a heavy sense of the general vanity and vexation and weariness of all things in the world? Does it seem as if all were barrenness and desolation? You complain of you know not what; lassitude, listlessness, despondency; the blank gloom of unprofitableness and unsatisfactoriness wrapping the whole of life in dreary clouds and mists. Oh! rest not an hour in such a mood of mind. You are a stranger in the earth; and you find it strange to you; so strange at times that you think you can

find nothing in it to content or cheer you. But the earth in which you are a stranger is the Lord's ; and you are sojourners with him in it. Arise ; and for very shame, shake off your lethargy. Go to him whose guests you are. Talk with him about the land in which you are his guests, and which is his. Question him about all those things that vex or weary you. " I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me."

XV.

LIVING AND DYING TO THE LORD.

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”—ROMANS XIV. 7, 8.

THIS is an instance of Paul’s way of rising from a particular question to a general principle. It is a way that is characteristic of the whole of the ethical or moral teaching of the gospel. A doubtful disputation springs up, on a small and narrow point of casuistry, as to meats or days. Instead of its being discussed by subtle argumentation and a fine balance of small reasons for and against, the case is at once carried into a higher, and purer, and broader, region of spiritual thought and duty, from whence there may be got both a nearer insight into heaven and a larger oversight of earth. In this view, what can be more refreshing than to observe, not only in our Lord’s answers to the various adversaries who sought to take him in his talk, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, lawyers, priests; but also in Paul’s manner of dealing with the practical difficulties that even in his day had begun to embarrass the churches, the summary and decisive, and as it were off-hand abruptness with which questions that in the hands of sophists or Jesuits, whether Protestant or Popish, might simply furnish occasion for the nicest and vaguest subtilties of cloudy, casuistical refining, are lifted up to the brighter and holier atmosphere of the heavenly

places, where, being dead and buried with Christ, and also risen with him, seeing light in his light, we may with singleness of eye have the whole body full of light ?

The present is a case in point. The peace of the church is threatened by questions about meats and days. The disputing parties have much to say, not only in support of their respective principles and practices ; that would have raised no difficulty ; but against tolerating or receiving as brethren those who differed from them. The case comes before the apostle. Instantly, at once, he carries it, as if by appeal or solemn reference, to the upper sanctuary. There at least both parties in the dispute are one. They are on the same footing ; having one Lord over them, and one judge before them. If the discussion of the doubtful question must go on, it will be, as it were, from a different position on both sides ; from above, where they are one, not from below, where their differences emerge.

But this is not all. Raised to this heavenly platform, we not only see the particular matter at issue in a new and harmonising light, suggesting forbearance, charity, and peace ; we see ourselves and our brethren as occupying a more exalted and sacred position than we dreamt of when we sought to conuess or coerce one another in regard to it. We belong, our brethren and we, not to one another, not even to ourselves. If we did, we might judge one another and judge for one another. But no ; we are not our own. We belong, our brethren and we alike, to a divine Master, who, in this, and in all things, is Lord over us all alike. There is here

I. A fact stated, both negatively and positively ; “ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.” And there is

II. An inference deduced from the fact : “ Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

I. There is a fact here stated, respecting all believers. It may be true of others ; but it is asserted here with special reference to them. They are called to realise it. And they are to realise it, not as an advice or command, with which they may or may not comply ; but as a great accomplished fact, to which they must conform. What, then, is the fact ? In what sense is it true of us, as believers, that none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself ; but that whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ?

I take the negative form of the statement first. And I ask what is meant by the living to ourselves, and dying to ourselves, which is here so emphatically disclaimed or denied ? “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” There is a sense in which we speak of a man living to himself, when he consults and acts, in all that he proposes and does, with a view to himself, as his great end, with a selfish eye to his own interests or his own pleasure. Is this the explanation of the phrase here ? It might be so, were it not for what follows, “none of us dieth unto himself.” A selfish man may be said to live to himself ; and as believers, delivered from selfishness, it may be said of us that none of us liveth to himself. But what of the other clause—“None of us dieth to himself” ? for it is the same word that is used by the apostle in both clauses ; not “no man,” but “none.” How is that denied of us ? Is it a matter within our choice ? Can any man die unto himself in the sense in which a selfish man is described as living unto himself ? It can scarcely be put as a distinctive characteristic of us as believers, that none of us dieth to himself, as if unbelievers died to themselves. It may be said perhaps that he does ; that he selfishly dies to himself, when, feeling death approach, he is only the more intensely occupied with himself, his comfort, his reputa-

tion, his affairs, and applies his whole mind merely to consider how his death can best be turned to account for upholding his character or forwarding his schemes. But that is really living to himself, not dying to himself, spending the last remnant of his life in selfishness ; not dying for his own profit.

When dying or not dying to one's self is connected, as in the text, with living or not living to one's self, it is plain that states of being, not deeds or actions, must be intended. There can be no reference, in short, to what is matter of voluntary choice, but rather to what is ordered and arranged for us. It is not what we do by our own free will, but what we are irrespectively of our own free will, that the expressions before us denote. The life we have, the death we are to have are not to ourselves ; "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

But the question still remains, What precisely is to be understood by this living to one's self and dying to one's self, that is so emphatically disowned ? And here it may first be asked, How far does this statement apply universally to all, to the unregenerate as well as to the believing people of God ? It is these last who are chiefly in the apostle's mind. But the statement, as a matter of fact, is universally true and applicable to all, that "none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself."

Yes ; we may go to the man still in his natural state, unregenerate, unbelieving, and say to him boldly, You do not live to yourself ; you do not die to yourself. I enter the busy hall of commerce or chamber of exchange, where merchants most do congregate ; and amidst the crowd of restless and careworn speculators, all making haste to be rich in life, and to bequeath riches at death, I lift up a voice of warning and cry, "None of you liveth to himself, and none of you dieth to himself." I visit the haunt of gaiety

and dissipation, arresting the flow of idle talk, silencing the din of revelry and mirth ; I ring in the ears of these children of vanity the same ominous announcement, "None of you liveth to himself, and none of you dieth to himself." Live you may, for a few years longer ; and, so far as the bent and bias of your own will goes, you may live to yourselves alone. You may rejoice, O young men or maidens, in your youth, and your heart may cheer you in the days of your youth ! You may walk in the ways of your own heart, and in the sight of your own eyes. And yet, plan and purpose as you may, strive and struggle as you may, not one of you all is living really to himself. The life you are living, such as it is, that life so self-engrossed, whether in the worship of gold or gain, or in the keen pursuit of pleasure, is not indeed to yourselves. You heap up riches, and know not who shall gather them. You live in wantonness, but you live in vain. Surely every man at his best state is altogether vanity.

Yes ; among the multitudes who are living without God in the world, none of them all is truly living to himself ! Each one of them is living a life, which, let him spend it as he may, is not to himself. It is not really to himself that, selfish as he may be to the very heart's core, he liveth. Alike in its source and in its whole stream and current, his life has a mystery and a meaning beyond any purpose or power of his. A man cannot isolate himself in this great and goodly universe of being. He cannot become either a hermit or a god ; he cannot live to himself.

And how emphatically and awfully true is it of the ungodly, in their latter end, that none of them dieth unto himself ! If even their life is so little, in any profitable sense or to any practical account, really to themselves, how much less their death ! What ! the wicked die to themselves. Nay. "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings ?"

Who can stand in the day of the Lord's wrath? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Judas, when he took the matter in his own hands, when he chose the time and manner of his own death, when he went and hanged himself, did he die to himself? Or the company of Corah, whom the earth swallowed up alive, did any one of them die to himself? Or take the vast number of whom it may be said that there are no bands in their death; who close a life of vanity with self-righteous decorum or mere slumbering insensibility, does any one of them die to himself, to his own good, for his own benefit, to his own profit, as if his death were for himself alone?

How great, ye godless ones, is your madness! If you could live to yourselves, or die to yourselves, then indeed ye might have some apology for trifling as you now do with the precious gift of life and the awful doom of death. If, O sinner, you could detach yourself from the system to which you belong, and shake yourself free from all connection with the intelligent creation around you, and the moral government that is exercised over it, if yours were a desert and desolate island in the universe on which you found yourself dwelling alone, underived, independent, irresponsible; yourself your own creator, preserver, lawgiver, and judge; if your personal history, for time and for eternity, were to be constructed, at your own pleasure, apart from all laws and powers and movements beyond yourself; if it were to be written, by your own hand, in a leaf severed altogether from the great universal book of destiny and duty and grace and judgment; then it might be wise, or at least it might be safe, to deal with the issues of life and death as now you do; leaving the settlement of all to future chance, or sacrificing all to present gaiety or gain.

But, if, O my poor friend, the very reverse of all this is true; if, speculate as you may, and struggle as you may,

you must yet, after all, find yourself, in life and in death, linked to an order of things above and beyond your own control ; if your position is really that of one who, coming into a busy and crowded factory, must either take his place and do his work, or be torn and trampled under foot, and perish ; if, as everything in your inward constitution, and everything in your outward condition, indicates, if, from the very first dawn of existence, downwards throughout infinite ages, you never for a single moment can order your own lot, or be dealt with ; by yourself, apart ; but must, whether you will or no, and whether for weal or woe, fall in with the onward, irresistible march of a mighty, all-embracing, and never-ending moral administration, outside of you and beyond all control of yours ; if, in short, none of you liveth to himself, and none of you dieth to himself ; oh ! what infatuation, what worse than the worst insanity is it, to make so little account as you seem to do of life and death !

Life and death ! Dread mysteries both of them ! Mysteries all the more, because of the indissoluble ties by which they bind us to whatever power upholds the universe and whatever law will judge it ! Mysteries, above all, because of the tremendous issues that turn on opportunities so momentary ! Life that in an hour may close ! Death, once for all, never, never to come again, that you may have another chance, or make another trial, of dying ! And what then ? What beyond ? What but one unbroken and unchanging eternity, wherein, at last, if not before, reaping as they have sown, glorifying God in his penal and retributive justice, and suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, the wicked, with the doomed angels, shall know terribly—because too late—that “ none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself.”

But it is of believers that the apostle speaks when he says, “ none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself.”

For the believer in Jesus, by the very fact of his believing, both life and death are invested with an entirely new character and new value : and it must be with reference to this new character and new value, with which his life and his death are invested, that it is here said of him that he does not live to himself, or die to himself. Your life and death, then, O believers in Jesus, are not to yourselves. I mean your new life and new death, as believers. They are not to be ascribed to yourselves, as if they belonged to you, as being purchased or procured by you. It is not to yourselves that you owe your living the new spiritual life, and dying the new heavenly death ; living the life that is hid with Christ in God, and dying the death which has no sting, and which leaves to the grave no victory. Neither do your life and death belong to you, O believers, as if for your own sakes and on your own account merely they were given to you.

Your being made spiritually alive you owe not to yourselves ; it is a free gift. Nor is it a gift terminating or taking end in yourselves. It has respect to something out of and beyond yourselves. And in the same way, as to that death which it is your privilege to die, it is altogether a free gift. And, like the life of faith of which it is the close, it is not a gift bestowed on you for your own sakes only ; as if all that was contemplated in it were your own quiet and hopeful passage into eternity. It is not, in this view, to yourself only that you die. Your death has bearings and influences and results far out of the reach of your imagination or that of any of your friends. None of you liveth to himself, none dieth to himself !

But now secondly, let us look at the positive side of the Apostle's statement in our text. The believer most gladly and gratefully owns "that whether he lives, he lives unto the Lord ; and whether he dies, he dies unto the Lord." If you live at all, spiritually, and in so far as you live, you

not only owe that life to the Lord, but you ascribe to the Lord, in the bestowing of that life upon you, an end beyond your own mere peace and safety, an end connected with himself; "whether you live, you live unto the Lord." The life you have got is not only from him; it is also and emphatically to him. Your life, if indeed you live, as accepted in the Beloved, justified through the righteousness, renewed by the Spirit, and adopted into a participation of the sonship of Jesus,—your life is to the Lord. You are not made spiritually alive, merely for your own comfort and peace; whether you live, it is to the Lord. It is for himself that he has redeemed and renewed and quickened you. Thus he explains his dealings with his people of old,— "Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake" (Ezek. xxxvi. 22). And thus Paul accounts for his own conversion,— "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16).

And so also as to the death you have to die; "whether we die, we die unto the Lord." You die; even you that believe in Jesus. Very different, indeed, is your death from that of unregenerate men. Even they, as to their miserable death, die not unto themselves; they die unto the Lord, unto him who hath made all things unto himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil; and who, willing to show his wrath and make his power known, endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. No such death awaits you. To you the whole character of death is changed. It is no more penal; it has no more sting. It is a falling asleep; a departing to be with Christ. And, with all its blessedness, it is unto the Lord. Your hopeful death, like your holy life, you owe to him. And your death,—your being

enabled and permitted thus to die,—is unto him. For he is himself the great end and final cause of the whole economy of grace and the whole dispensation of the Spirit, through which it is that you do thus die. Well, therefore, may it be said that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints ; their very dust is dear to him, and their blood is precious in his sight. For their death is to him ; they die to the Lord. He is glorified in their dying.

These views may tend to soothe our spirits, in the contemplation alike of the lives and of the deaths of the people of God. The lives of these servants of the Lord are not always such as we might beforehand have desired or expected. Nor do their deaths correspond in all instances with what might seem to us expedient. They often, in life, have a troubled and uneasy course. Bodily disease and disorder, mental depression, adverse circumstances and reverses of fortune, family afflictions, and loss of friends, may be observed as their thorns in the flesh. Or still more painfully to disturb their pilgrimage, still more distressingly to awaken dark thoughts in the onlookers, spiritual trials mar the smooth and even flow of their religious experience. And it may seem strange and almost unaccountable that holy men should be visited with such seasons of desertion and despondency as are allotted to them.

But may not the explanation be found in this fact, that none of them liveth to himself? We are set, says Paul, as a spectacle to angels and men. The believer's life is not unto himself alone ; God has other ends to serve by it besides the believer's own peace, or even his sanctification and salvation. Did the Psalmist, for example, as a spiritual man, a subject of grace, and a child of God, live unto himself? Was it as living unto himself that he was made to undergo that marvellous variety of experiences of all sorts, joyous and grievous, sin-laden and sin-relieved, dark and bright, par-

taking of all earth's vicissitudes, all hell's terrors, and all heaven's glories, which makes his harp the common instrument of praise for all believers in all ages, and his songs the staple alike of their praise and of their complaints, in every mood of mind and in every changing scene ?

And to the death of the Lord's saints and servants, as well as to their tried and troubled life, may this same consideration reconcile us. These deaths may seem to be, many of them, premature ; unseasonable in respect of the age of those taken away ; unseasonable, especially, in respect of the exigencies of the times that can ill afford such losses. One consolation we have in the assurance that for themselves, being ripe to depart and to be with Christ is far better than to remain. But the text suggests another. The fact of its being good for themselves, is not the only or the chief reason of their renewal. None of them dieth to himself. If they die, they die unto the Lord. Their death is not for their own sakes merely, but for the Lord's ; it is to advance the Lord's cause and promote the Lord's ends. They die to the Lord.

II. Such being the fact ; that " whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ;" it follows as a fair and necessary inference, that " whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. If, living and dying, we live and die to the Lord, this manifestly implies that, living and dying, we are the Lord's. We are in his hands ; at his disposal ; absolutely and out and out his property, to be dealt with by him according to his good pleasure. Thus we and all men are the Lord's.

All men, I say. For here again I must apply this word first, with all affection, yet with all faithfulness and plainness of speech, to the ungodly and unbelieving. It is true of you, whether you will or no, that living and dying you are the Lord's. And remember that the life and death in respect

of which you are the Lord's, are not unto yourselves, but unto the Lord.

Ah ! in this view, I may well ask, Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge ? You have life from the Lord and death too. Both the life and the death, you are solemnly assured, are not unto yourselves merely, but have ends and issues reaching far beyond yourselves, and involving manifold considerations besides your welfare alone. And you whose life and whose death are thus not unto yourselves, are yet yourselves, living and dying, the Lord's. He has you in his grasp, and you cannot escape.

Ah ! were either of these two things otherwise, your case might not be so desperate as it is. If the life you live and the death you have to die were unto yourselves ; or if you, living and dying not unto yourselves, but whether you think it or not, whether you choose it or not, unto the Lord ; were still yourselves your own, and not his ; you might have some apology for your unconcern, and for living and dying as you please. But, O my friends ! do but consider what it is to belong absolutely and helplessly to that very Lord who tells you that, live as you may, it is to him and his ends, and not to yourselves, that you live ; and die as you may, it is to him and to his ends, and not to yourselves, that you die ! Oh ! surely " it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Consider who this Lord is. Is it not he who, at a great price, has purchased this lordship over you, this ownership of you ? " For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

It is Jesus, who died and rose again, to whom the Father has given power over all flesh. And what are the purposes which he has now in his heart, and to which he must, of very necessity, make your living and your dying subservient ? Are they not purposes stretching infinitely beyond any selfish views and aims of yours touching your own mere safety and

impunity? What! Did he himself leave the glory of the upper sanctuary, and tabernacle in flesh here on the earth, and endure the pains of guilt and wrath, and lie in the dark grave, and burst the bands of death and hell, and ascend triumphant to heaven, for no higher, holier end than you, in your living and dying, might propose to your carnal minds? He seeks the glory of his Father; the glory of his Father's justice as well as of his Father's love; his penal severity as well as his rich and tender mercy. He seeks the establishment of his people, in righteousness and peace, for ever.

Ay! And it is for accomplishing these ends that he has it made sure to him, in the everlasting covenant, that you, O sinners, every one of you, whether you live, live not to yourselves, but to him; and whether you die, die not to yourselves, but to him! Else you might, living or dying, frustrate and make void the great designs of his mediatorial cross and crown. And you, who must thus have your living and your dying alike made to serve these great designs of his,—you, whether you live, or whether you die, are yourselves his; his to be used, and turned to account, and disposed of, for these designs of his: you are his; altogether and for ever his; prisoners in his prison house; criminals reserved for his judgment; enemies given over to his execution upon them of deserved and inevitable wrath. I beseech you, beloved brethren, to “flee from this wrath to come.” “Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

But again, I turn to you who believe. My text concerns you. And it does so both for comfort and for admonition.

It is your comfort to know that, whether you live or die, you are the Lord's; and very specially to know this in connection with the assurance which goes before, that “none of you liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” Is it indeed true that your life and death, as spiritual no less than as

natural men, are not to yourselves, but to the Lord? Then, of very necessity, for his own name's sake, he must take you, and have you, and keep you, living or dying, as his own. Whether you live, you live to him. Well; that he may turn your life, which is his gift, to his own wise and gracious purposes, since it is unto him that you live, he must have you, thus living, to be his, and his alone.

Ah! what a security have you here, believers. What a guarantee, both for the safe preservation and for the right ordering of your life, as a life that you live not unto yourselves, but unto the Lord! If the life he gives you,—the life spiritual, I mean, over and above the life natural,—were for ends and uses of your own; if it were unto yourselves; you might dread the risk of your forfeiting it, or of his withdrawing it, or suffering it to languish and decay. A woman may forget her sucking child, and cease to have compassion on the son of her womb, when she is forced to view the life, drawn from her womb, and nourished by her bosom, as no more pleasant or profitable to herself, but only turned to the account of selfish ends, in which she can have no share and no concern. But the Lord will not forget you. He cannot. For your life of grace, which you have from him, is also to him; very profitable to him, as redounding to his glory; very pleasant and congenial, as being according to his heart. Because your life is thus to him, as well as of him, he will see to its safe keeping and final blessedness. He will grave your names on the palms of his hands, and guard you as the apple of his eye.

And if thus living unto him, you are so securely his,—ah! how, as regards your dying, may you cast all your care upon him! Your dying is unto him. And therefore it concerns him to see to it,—and he will assuredly see to it,—that all about your dying shall be rightly arranged. Dying, you are his; for you die unto him. Your dying, indeed, may not

be so timed or so adjusted as you or your friends might judge best. But still you and they have this confidence, that your dying, whensoever, wheresoever, howsoever, death may come, is and must be unto the Lord. You may leave therefore the ordering of it, as to time, place, and manner, entirely to him. In your dying, which is unto him, you are and must be his.

Is not this enough to allay all anxiety beforehand, and to remove every fear when your hour arrives? You are tempted sometimes to anticipate in imagination the circumstances of your latter end; and to speculate as to how things may then fall out, and how you may be able to hold on. But, O my friends! beware of such looking ahead. It is always dangerous as well as presumptuous to be asking a sign, or seeking to put to the proof either yourselves or God as to trials not yet come. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." There is no promise of grace in advance of the occasion for it; no warrant to look for help from God before trouble, but only for God himself as a very present help in trouble. And as to your death as well as your life, is it not enough to know that since "none of you liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself," therefore, living and dying, you are the Lord's?

The text is applicable for admonition as well as for comfort. It gives the death-blow to all selfishness, both as regards your judgment of others, and as regards your management of yourselves. For if the fact that, whether you live, you live unto the Lord, or whether you die, you die unto the Lord, makes you, whether you live or whether you die, the Lord's, in respect of the interest which he must on that account feel in you and the care he must take of you; it must make you the Lord's also, in respect of your obligation, whether you live or whether you die, to feel and own yourselves to be his, and to seek not your own ends, but his. It is he who gives you your happy life as believers, and your hopeful death. And he gives you both for the express purpose that

they may be not unto yourselves, but unto him ; nay, with the emphatic intimation that they are so. You are not lords over one another, entitled to dictate to one another, or to criticise and condemn one another, in matters of doubtful disputation. You are not lords over yourselves, entitled to have your will consulted, or to take it amiss when your will is crossed. Whether you live or whether you die, you are the Lord's. For the life of faith which he gives, and the death of hope which he promises, are unto him. "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake."

I believe it, O Lord, help thou mine unbelief. I am willing, Lord, make me more willing, to accept the life, the death, on that footing, on these terms. And so accepting thine unspeakable gift, for which thanks be to thee, I dare not set myself up as a judge of others or a guide to myself. I can but ask thee, O Lord, to lead me, as one blind, by a way that I know not, and so far as thou permittest me to see, to give me evermore singleness of eye, that my whole body may be full of light.

XVI.

CHRIST'S LORDSHIP OVER THE DEAD AND
LIVING.

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”—ROMANS XIV. 9.*

THE lordship here ascribed to Christ is very emphatically represented to be the object or end of his death and resurrection. It is that for which he was appointed to die and rise again. It is that with a view to which he actually died and rose again. There is thus, at all events, a close connection of design and dependence established between his dying and rising again, and his being Lord both of the dead and living. What precisely that connection is, and what are its practical fruits and issues, may perhaps be best considered

* At the outset I may explain that, by consent of the best critics, it is admitted that there are not in the original text three words descriptive of Christ's work and its reward, but only two—not “died, and rose, and revived,” but only “died and rose,” or “died and revived.” There is an easy explanation of the received text. Some transcriber may have tried to put the truth of the text more emphatically, by means of a different word from what had formerly been used to denote the Lord's resurrection. And soon all the three might come to be employed, as giving additional emphasis to the thought. But I am free from the necessity of finding three meanings for the three words in our version. I may use the text as it stands, but with this qualification, that it is for the sake of emphasis merely that “rose and revived” are conjoined; and that I deal with it not as discriminating between these two words, but as identifying them.

after we have inquired a little into the lordship itself. First, then, let us ask how or in what sense Christ is Lord both of the dead and living? Secondly, how does his being so result or flow from his dying and rising again? And thirdly, what bearings of a practical sort has his being thus Lord both of the dead and living, in virtue of his dying and rising again, on his own people, and on mankind at large?

The first of these questions is preliminary merely, and subsidiary to the other two, but yet is all-important to a right understanding of them.

I. It is plainly a mediatorial lordship that Christ is here said to have. It is a lordship that can belong to him only in his mediatorial character. It is altogether apart from the supreme dominion belonging to him from everlasting as one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the undivided essence of the Godhead, and in the eternal counsel of the Godhead for the government of the universe. It may be, and indeed is, a lordship which he could not possess were he not, in his own nature, "over all, God blessed for ever." It is a lordship, however, not possessed from eternity otherwise than in decree. As to actual possession, it is bestowed in time and dependent on events in time. It is as God-man, as Immanuel, as the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, that he is Lord.

But of whom now, in that capacity, is he Lord? That is the question here. Is it a universal lordship over all things, over all created beings, intelligences, powers, influences? Such a lordship is conferred on him as mediator. So Scripture testifies. But is that what is meant here? Or is it a more limited lordship over his own peculiar people that is intended? The reference to his death and resurrection, as procuring or preparing the way for the lordship here spoken of, does not of itself determine that point. For both his lordship over all things and his lordship over his people

must be traced to his dying and rising again as their common source.

But the occasion of this whole argument may determine which of the two it is that is in the apostle's view. What is his drift? He is dealing with a practical matter; a matter of simple duty among believers. He is teaching a very plain lesson of Christian charity and forbearance. You differ from one another about some points of doubtful disputation; whether, in certain circumstances, you should act thus, or thus; do this or that. It is assumed that they are points about which believers may honestly and conscientiously differ, without prejudice to their character and standing. Well, what should be your rule of conduct towards one another, and what the reason of it? Do not judge for one another. Do not judge one another. Let every man judge for himself, and judge himself. That is the rule. And the reason corresponds to the rule, for it is this—You do not belong to one another; you are not one another's lords. Nay, for that matter, you do not belong to yourselves; you are not your own lords. One is your lord, to whom alone you all belong. It is Christ, who, that he might be your Lord, both died and rose again.

Thus far the argument tells for its being the more restricted lordship that is meant. But here a new question may occur. Why is there any mention made of the dead? Why is the alternative or cumulative idea of the dead as distinct from the living introduced? The argument does not seem to require this. It is the living only who are or can be concerned about the rule. It should be enough if the reason applied to them and embraced them alone. What have the dead to do with this lesson, with the rule, or with its reason? One answer to this question may be that the phrase is simply meant to intensify the thought of Christ's lordship as being very complete and thorough; absolutely per-

fect; embracing your whole being. But may not this be another answer? The living, who have to do with the rule and the reason for it, are soon to be themselves the dead. You who are now living are to look at the point in dispute in the light in which it will appear to you when you come to die, when you are dead. You no more live to yourselves than you die to yourselves. You live unto the Lord as truly as you die unto the Lord. Living, you are the Lord's, as much as you are so when dying or dead. You have as little right to set up for yourselves in this matter of judging for one another, or judging one another, now when you are living, as you will have when you are dead. You are equally amenable to the Lord now as then. You live to him as thoroughly as you die to him. Living you are his as absolutely as when you die or are dead. For "to this end Christ both died and rose, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

You are thus led to see, as regards all these questions, the present in the future; to consider what you now are, to one another, to yourselves, to the Lord, in the view of what you will be, and will apprehend yourselves to be, when you die, when you are dead. How would a departed saint, one of the pious dead, a believer gone hence,—how would such a one think, and feel, and act with reference to what is now at issue and in discussion among you? Put yourself, I say to each one among you, in the position of such a one; suppose yourself, from that heavenly world of the dead, to be contemplating this earthly world of the living, and looking into the question upon which you are now pronouncing so decided, and perhaps so censorious, a judgment. I do not ask if it appears as important as before. But I ask if you can take the same attitude in regard to it that you scrupled not to take before. Will you venture, as a denizen of the upper sanctuary, to be as dictatorial, as magisterial,

as judicial, as you are tempted to be in the lower region of the church's present habitation? Will you take as much upon you, and give yourself so confident an air, and pronounce as dogmatically upon your fellows, then as now? Will not you feel yourself to be less, and Christ to be more; yourself to be nothing, and Christ to be all in all? Dead, you will thus own his lordship; living, own it all the same.

Here, then, is a practical question. Do I own Christ as Lord both of the dead and living? Is he as much my Lord now, while I am living, as he will be when I die? Of course he is so, in fact. But is he so, in respect of my realisation of the fact, and my acting of it out?

Have you ever tried to imagine how Christ will be Lord of all the dead at last; how he is Lord of the dead now? I mean the pious dead, yonder company of the church's worthies; the men of whom the world was not worthy. How do they know and acknowledge Christ's lordship over them? what is their manner of life under it? I cannot say, it must be left to each one of you to work out the question. The text throws little or no light on it, not at least directly. More may come out as we proceed. Meanwhile, the principle seems to be clearly established, that the lordship asserted on behalf of Christ is a lordship over his people; and such a lordship over them living, as has its type, one may say, as well as its consummation, in his lordship over them when dead. "He is Lord both of the dead and living."

II. The connection between this lordship of Christ and his death and resurrection is very close. "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." It was "the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

It is the appropriate recompense of reward, the natural fruit and issue, the legitimate consequence and crowning result, of his dying and rising again, that he is Christ and Lord.

It is so in many views and on many accounts. But there is one fact or principle which may serve comprehensively to bring out its true ground or rationale. That fact or principle is the oneness, the identity, in respect of law as well as of nature, between Christ and his people. For you must consider in what character Christ died and rose again. He was not an isolated private individual, acting or transacting with the Father, in that great trial, for himself alone. He bore a representative character. He had gathered up in his one single person all the interests of all his people. He was theirs, in that day, and they were his; he their proxy, surety, substitute; they his property, his members, part and parcel of himself. Lordship over them, in the sense of absolute proprietorship, or right of ownership, in them; lordship over them, as of a man over his own body; is really involved, as already constituted, in his dying and rising again. He has them as much his, as he has his own body, his own person; as much his, to be at his disposal, in his keeping, under his hand. This is at least lordship begun; lordship in the germ or bud.

Look at it for a little. Look, in this point of view, on Christ dying and rising again. There is not much of apparent lordship of any kind here at all. In his dying and rising again, he appears rather as passive than as active; acted upon rather than acting. Or, in so far as he acts, his action is the voluntary surrender of himself to be dealt with by the Father judicially, first in the way of subjection to death, the wages of sin, and then in the way of justification, or resurrection to life, the reward of righteousness. He consents, in dying, to be treated by the righteous Father as guilty, suffering the doom of guilt, and in rising again to be treated by

the righteous Father as righteous ; and justified and recompensed accordingly. He is servant, as it might seem, and not Lord, in the whole of that wondrous transaction of law and justice between the Father and him. In his death he says, "Mine ears hast thou bored ; I am thy servant." In his resurrection the Father says, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melehisedec." Thus, dying and rising again, he stands forth as not Lord, but servant, servant all through. And it is through this service that he reaches his lordship. And the lordship answers to the service in all respects. Mark well the correspondence.

The persons interested are the same. His death and resurrection, in order to his lordship, must have reference to all over whom his lordship extends, and to none else. He died and rose for this end, that, in virtue of his dying and rising, he might be Lord both of the dead and living. It is not, however, all the dead and living that are here meant. It is not mankind universally and indiscriminately. He is, no doubt, Lord over all mankind, as he is head over all things to the church, which is his body. And that lordship or high priesthood is no doubt connected with his dying and rising again. But that is not the lordship here asserted. What is asserted is a lordship which, whatever it may have in common with the other, is in itself peculiar. It is lordship such as true believers alone can acknowledge. For they alone can acknowledge it as a lordship founded on the Lord's dying and rising again. They may not be more thoroughly and absolutely in his hands, as mediatorial Lord, than all the rest of the human race are, or than all creation is. And in both cases his mediatorial lordship is the fruit of his dying and rising.

But, in the first place, there is intelligence and consent in the one case that we cannot find in the other. Christ dying and rising again is Lord of me ; Lord of me even if I

am living and dying in unbelief. He is so in spite of me, whether I understand or not, whether I will it or not. But I believe, he himself helping my unbelief. And now he is Lord of me, with my full intelligence and most cordial consent.

Then, secondly, there is a real distinction, as regards the dependence of Christ's lordship, in his dying and rising again, between the two cases. It is not merely that men generally do not apprehend the thing as believing men apprehend it. But in the thing itself there is a difference. It is all-important to note and understand the difference, especially the apostle's practical point of view. Christ's general lordship over all, considered as the result and reward of his consenting to die and to be raised from the dead, is a very great and a very solemn fact. It should strike terror into every bosom. He is Lord of thee, O sinner. He is Lord of thee by right of his dying and rising again; so dying and rising again that thou mayest have him, if thou wilt, all sinful as thou art, to be Lord of thee for thy salvation, but yet, oh! lay it to heart, so dying and rising again that he is Lord of thee anyhow; Lord of thee living and dead; Lord of thee for ever.

But, after all, this lordship is rather a necessary accompaniment or consequence of Christ's dying and rising again, than a proper fruit or natural issue of it. It is indispensable to the accomplishment of the end for which he died and rose again, that he should have as part of his recompense this wide prerogative of universal lordship. But the end itself, the joy set before him, was surely a lordship more peculiar and more precious. "Father, glorify thy Son. Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Here is universal, with a view to limited lordship, power over all flesh, in order to the giving of eternal life to as many as the Father

hath given him. And it is all based on his dying and rising again ; on his finished and accepted work. " I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Thus clearly is it manifest that the persons savingly interested in the Mediator's service of dying and rising again are the only persons over whom his lordship is here claimed, or asserted as the direct fruit and proper issue of his death and resurrection ; the real end with a view to which he both died, and rose, and revived.

Not only are the parties interested the same, but there must be harmony or correspondence between the lordship itself and that on which it rests, and from which it flows.

It rests on service and flows from service. And the service is the service of sacrifice. He died and rose as a servant ; as a servant rendering the service of sacrifice. And if he died and rose in that character and capacity, the lordship, with a view to which he died and rose, must have in it still that quality or condition. He died and rose that he might be Lord of those whom his service of dying and rising really concerns ; Lord of them, whether dead or living. But he died and rose, not that he might be different as Lord from what he was as dying and rising. No. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It would seem, therefore, that his lordship must be, as regards them, in some sense a continuation of his service. It must retain the spirit as well as accept the fruit of the service. Christ, as his people's Lord, cannot be to them different from what he was when as the Father's servant on their behalf he died and rose.

For pre-eminently in his case we must beware of committing the error into which we are too apt to fall, with reference to ourselves and others, in our conceptions of the unseen state after death ; the error I mean of fancying that

in the mere passing from the temporal to the eternal world there is a break, a blank, a breach of the continuity of the line of conscious existence ; so that the immortal spirit may be ushered into that other sphere, under different auspices from those which mark its departure hence ; and may begin its life anew upon a new footing. It is a grievous and dangerous error, when we suffer it to influence our dealings either with ourselves or with our friends. It is not to be tolerated, nor anything like it, when it is Christ that is concerned ; especially when it is his relation to his people that is in question. He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Thus, carrying back the lordship into the dying and rising, we may see, even in the humiliation, the real glory of the exaltation.

He is Lord, when he dies and rises and lives ; Lord, in their life and in their death, of those for whom he dies and rises and lives. It is as thus fully, in that sense and to that effect, Lord of them, that he dies and rises and lives for them. True, his dying and living again is, in respect of causal order, the prior condition of his being Lord. Still, in his very dying and living again, he is Lord, Lord of those for whom he dies and lives again. His dying and living again is a lordly act as respects them ; a right lordly act, not in its issue only, but in itself. It is as Lord of them, living and dying, that he dies for them and lives again. Nor is it merely in the way of anticipation, or in respect merely of an infallible fore-ordaining decree giving them to him in covenant from the beginning, that he is their Lord in his dying and living again. His lordship over them, in his dying and living again for them, is not prospective merely, but present. Not merely after, but in his dying and living again, he is their Lord. His dying and living again is in itself an act or exercise of lordship over them. He not

merely purchases, he asserts and vindicates his lordship over them, when he dies to redeem them to himself as his own with his precious blood, and lives again to present them as his own to the Father, saying, Behold I and the little ones whom thou hast given me.

It is seen to be so, if his cross, as the crisis of his humiliation preparatory to his glory, is rightly and spiritually contemplated. Doubtless, there is in that cross much that is significant of anything rather than lordship; ignominy and shame, passive helplessness and weakness, and to a deeper insight, service ending in sacrifice, the submission of the victim bowing his head to the stroke of justice, the very opposite, as it might seem, of anything like lordly power. But it must have been a lordly port, a right lordly bearing, that won from the Roman soldier the exclamation, "Truly this was the Son of God." And it was a clearer and more spiritual view of the royal majesty of the sufferer, in his very suffering, that prompted the dying prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Might we not with advantage dwell more than we do in this aspect of the lordship of Christ, over us personally as not merely flowing from his redeeming work for us, in the way of natural consequence and appropriate reward, but as really forming part of it and entering into it as an essential element and living principle of power. May we not be apt to look on Jesus Christ, our Lord, dying on the cross and rising again, rather as a deliverer provided for us than as a ruler and lord appointed over us? Do we not dwell more on his service and sacrifice for us than on his lordship over us, or separate the one from the other in our thoughts? May it not be good to contemplate the one great transaction of his death and resurrection more than we do, not merely as a work undertaken and accomplished for our sakes and on our behalf, but as in itself, in its very nature, an assertion

and recovery of his dominion over us, as Lord both of the dead and living ?

Then, carrying forward, as it were, the death and resurrection into the lordship consequent thereon, we may reverently, I think, trace a certain savour or influence from the one, modifying the character and manner of exercise of the other.

Thus the character of the lordship may be regarded as affected by the preliminary experience of him who wields it. For that experience is not like an ordinary fact in history, a stepping-stone merely, in the order of cause and effect, to something beyond itself, which may be quite detached and distinct in nature from itself. Neither is it a mere condition, which, when once fulfilled, may be lost sight of in the view of what its fulfilment obtains for the fulfiller of it. It enters into the very heart of the lordship, even as it abides and because it abides ever in the heart of him whose lordship it is. And it does so in a way implying something more than the Lord's recollection or reminiscence of it, though that is much. For these are precious words that can never lose their power and pathos—"He still remembers in the skies his tears, his agonies, and cries." It is a fresh, constant, living element in the lordship itself; making it a lordship of a very peculiar type, altogether singular and unique. It may be difficult to grasp it in logical thought, or fix it in a formal definition. But, if I mistake not, the believing heart knows something, or perhaps rather feels something, of what it is.

There is such a thing as a lordship of pure and simple sovereignty, which may be conceived of as vested in one sitting aloft on a throne of unapproachable majesty. To such a lordship these words of the Psalmist may apply—"Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee." There may be also such a thing as a lordship more familiar; coming down, as it were, nearer the level of one subject to

it, and partaking, perhaps, more of the nature of friendly oversight than of the nature of strict dominion or authority. But such ideas, even if we could realise them in combination, do not adequately describe the lordship of Christ, so as to satisfy the loyal souls of his redeemed. They see always in the living Lord the dying, bleeding Lamb. It is the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne ; and he is there as the Lamb slain ; of the very same frame of mind still ; having at heart the very same objects ; feeling still as he has ever felt ; acting still as he has ever acted ; sustaining still the very selfsame relations he has ever sustained to his Father and to his people ; discharging the selfsame offices ; doing the selfsame work.

Hence, in the manner of its exercise, as well as in its essential character, the lordship of Christ is peculiar ; being affected by the previous preliminary experience, which is prolonged, as it were, and enters into it. The spirit of the lordship, being identical with the spirit of that antecedent service of sacrifice, must control the manner in which it is carried out.

In particular it must determine and direct it as a lordship running in the line of highest law and deepest love. For in his dying and rising these two elements meet ; highest law and deepest love ; law magnified and made honourable by such a tribute of obedience to its holy command and endurance of its just judgment as only he could render who is at once the Father's fellow and the Father's willing subject, and love more profound in the terrible sacrifice by which it purged guilt and prevailed over death, than a whole eternity of bounty to the sinless could have displayed or proved. And it is as thus dying and rising, in a sense, evermore, that he is Lord of me ; Lord of me to cause that very law and that very love to meet in my heart as truly as they meet in that great heart of his which broke to make them one on Calvary.

The thought of lordship exercised after a fashion such as that might well appal me, lawless and unloving as I am, were it not for this very consideration, that it is lordship full fraught, and all-pervaded with the sense and savour of these dread realities, the dying and the rising. They are realities to him and in him now ; now as much as ever. As my Lord, by the power of his Spirit he makes them realities to me and in me, as thoroughly so, as they were and are realities to him and in him. He subdues me by uniting me to himself ; to himself dying, I am crucified with him ; to himself living, he liveth in me ; to himself as my Lord, in terms of law graciously fulfilled and love righteously triumphant.

III. In the light of its connection with his dying and rising, let us now look at the lordship of Christ more practically, in its bearing upon those over whom it is exercised ; the dead ; the living ; of his own people first ; and then, all else.

As dying and rising, he is Lord of the dead ; of his own dead. He is their Lord in the very article and agony of their death ; giving them victory in the very moment of death ; taking from death his sting ; and taking it from him precisely when he can urge it home most vehemently ; on a deathbed ; where the sense of sin is apt to be keenest. As their Lord, dying and rising, he gives them grace and strength to utter the challenge, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? "

Then, as their Lord, their Lord in virtue of his dying and rising, he receives them to himself. They depart to be with him ; absent from the body, present with the Lord ; with the Lord as dying and rising ; claiming to be their Lord on the ground of his dying and rising ; and on the ground of that as not a past event in history, but a present and eternal reality. They pass into the arms of one who is their Lord ; their Lord evermore, as dying and rising.

What it is for them to be with him and under him as their Lord now, their Lord now always on such a footing as that, who can tell? Perfect rest, unbroken repose, may well be theirs. Away from all that might suggest any idea of insurrection or insubordination, clasped to the bosom of one who claims them as his subjects on the ground of his having made common cause with them as their brother, dying and rising; nay, who claims them in virtue of his still virtually in a sense dying and rising evermore afresh as their brother and their Lord. What peace may be their portion; peace in having him as their Lord; their Lord upon the footing of an unchallenged and consummated redemption; through his dying and rising!

But his lordship over the dead is not yet complete. It reaches to the deliverance of their mortal bodies from the power of the grave. As their Lord he bids the sea give up its dead, and the gaping earth surrender its prey. As their Lord he changes their mortal bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body; his body glorified, and become a spiritual body, in virtue of his dying and rising. So they bear the image of their heavenly Lord. And ever thereafter, as their Lord, inweaving into his lordship his dying and rising, he leads them among the many mansions of his Father's house, and finds them, as he rules them, congenial subjects. No idea of independence is in their bosoms; no thought of any right to consult and act for themselves, or to coerce and judge one another. The dead, of whom he is then Lord, are revived and reawakened to activity. But it is to activity unselfish and unsuspecting. They all serve the Lord, and neither serve nor judge one another.

This perfect lordship of Christ over the dead; his own dead; his in virtue of his dying and rising; is to be apprehended and realised as in the same sense and on the

same ground a lordship over the living ; his own living ones ; you who live in him. He is your Lord ; the Lord of you living ; the Lord of your life ; of the life which you have in him as dying and rising. He is the Lord of you while living, exactly as he is to be the Lord of you when dead. For to this end he both died, and rose, and revived, not merely that he might be Lord of you when dead, in the future world, where his lordship, as it might seem, might be more readily owned and more pleasantly exercised ; but that he might be Lord of you while living ; as you are now, and where you are now. It is with his lordship over you in that view that you are now practically concerned. It is to be acknowledged and recognised by you now as the very same with what it will be to you when you are dead and gone.

You cannot indeed now take in, as you may hope to do then, the full meaning of that dying and rising on which the lordship is based, and with which it is identified ; and therefore you may not be able to perceive and realise all that is implied in your acknowledgment and recognition of the lordship, any more than you can see all the beauty, blessedness, and glory of the lordship itself. For it is a lordship which can be fully understood and appreciated only when the dying and rising with which it is one are fully known. That cannot be in this life ; nor even all at once in the life to come. For there is in that dying and rising a height and depth, a height of supremest reverence for law, and a depth of love reaching the lowest hell, which eternity will not suffice to measure. And therefore also the lordship, in its character and mode of exercise, will be ever unfolding itself and making itself realised throughout the everlasting ages. Still, however, that does not touch the identity of the lordship all throughout ; its being the same now as then. He is Lord, as of the dead, so of the living. He lords it over

you living, as he has ever lorded it over his people dying and dead ; as he will lord it over you when you die and after you are dead ; now, as then, in virtue and in the spirit of his dying and rising.

Surely it is a blessed lordship for you now to realise and own. To think that he is your Lord, as dying for you and rising again ; your Lord as surely now, amid all changes, as he will be hereafter in the changeless eternity ; that he has you now in his possession, redeemed by his death, and quickened by his life, as surely as he has any of his saints who have already entered into his rest ; that you belong to him as your Lord, and are his property while you live now on this earth, as inalienably as those do who have passed beyond all this earth's risks and hazards. Is not that a source of confidence alike in life and in death ? And is it not also a motive to most thorough self-surrender ? For indeed it is only through most complete and thorough self-surrender that this great security of refuge in the lordship of Christ as dying and rising can be reached. How may I assert and vindicate my freedom from any who would captivate or condemn me, any who would rule or judge me ? How but by an unreserved appeal to Christ as my Lord ; lording it over me as dying for me, and rising and living for me ? And how may I enter such an appeal otherwise than in the attitude of one surrendering all right of rule and judgment in my own person ; judging no man, and refusing to be judged by any ; because I know no other judge or ruler but the Son of the Highest ; who to this end both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Ah ! to know him now while I live, in that character and in that relation to me, as thoroughly and as exclusively as I shall know him hereafter when I am dead, if I am really his ! Would that this were my highest ambition, the most intense and earnest longing of my soul ! Alas ! that this should be an attain-

ment of which I fall short so lamentably. Lord Jesus, come ; work in me by thy Spirit, so as to move me to say—"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." "To me to live is Christ."

XVII.

WORK FOR THE LORD AND WELFARE IN
THE LORD.

“And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.”—EZRA VI. 14. (HAGGAI I. II.)

THIS is a striking testimony, on the part of the men of work to the men of words, or the word. “The elders of the Jews builded.” So the leader testifies. “And they prospered.” Not, however, through their own building, though that of course was indispensable, but “through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo.” Of the two, the prophesying of Haggai, being briefer and more direct than that of Zechariah, may be taken as the exponent, both of the state of mind among the Jews that needed prophetic ministry, and of the sort of ministry provided for it, at the crisis of the return from captivity at Babylon. Haggai has three messages to deliver. The first, which occupies the first chapter, bears the date of the first day of the sixth month of the second year of the reign of Darius. The second, which is contained in the first nine verses of the second chapter, is dated the twenty-first day of the seventh month of the same year. And the third, which closes the book, has for its date, twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. The three messages of

Haggai, which I have to deal with, are comprised within the space of four months. And these months would seem to fit into the year of the favourable response or rescript from the Persian king Darius, to which Ezra refers in our text; connecting it devoutly with the commandment of the God of Israel. No doubt, Ezra makes mention of the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, at an earlier stage (ver. 1), at the very beginning of Darius' reign. But Haggai's prophesying fits in most naturally to the occasion of the later notice taken of it by the historian, the liberty given to complete the work. Upon this footing, let us look at Haggai's three prophetic messages.

I. The first (chap. i.) is not prophetic at all in our modern limited sense of what is prophecy. It contains no prediction. It is simply a word of admonition. As such, it is in harmony with what was the chief function of the Jewish prophets; whose office was really not so much to foretell future events, as to bring to bear authoritatively on present sin and duty, on the rebuking of present sin and the enforcing of present duty, the principles of the divine government as laid down by the law. The special sin here rebuked is that of remissness in the present duty of building the Lord's house, when the opportunity is given, and all things are favourable. Need we wonder at this stirring appeal being found necessary? Look at the circumstances in which the people are placed.

Some fifteen or sixteen years have passed since Cyrus, conquering the Babylonians, had been moved by God to issue the decree for the Jews' return to their own land. Immediately on their return, they made it their first care to restore the worship of the Lord God of their fathers. They erected his altar, resumed the offering of the appointed sacrifices, and kept the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezra iii. 1-5). They

took steps also for the rebuilding of the Temple ; providing men, money, and materials ; and in the second year after their restoration, the good work was happily begun (vers. 6-13). Very soon, however, it was hindered, and at last arrested, by the jealousy of envious neighbours ; especially of that mixed people, afterwards known as Samaritans, who dwelt in the country which had belonged to the ten tribes (2 Kings xvii. 24-41), immediately to the north of Jerusalem. They first proposed to join with the restored captives of Judah in their holy undertaking (Ezra iv. 1-3), urging the plea, " Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do, and we do sacrifice to him." Their proposal was declined, as was their religion, however afterwards purified, was still of a very motley character (2 Kings xvii. 33), and they were themselves as much heathen as Israelitish, or rather far more : on this they were not unnaturally irritated and indignant. They could not take any direct and open measures to arrest the work on the spot. But by their influence at the Persian court they succeeded in so alarming the king, whose subjects they as well as the restored Jews were, that he issued a decree against the work. It had been going on slowly for some years, in consequence of these hostile movements. And now, for two years, it ceased altogether.

So matters stood at the accession of Darius to the throne of Persia. That event, as it would seem, was regarded by the prophets and princes of Judea as a fitting occasion for resuming the work. They may have thought that the new monarch, whose mind had not been poisoned by the malicious representations of their enemies, might be inclined rather to follow out the earlier and better policy of the great Cyrus, than to imitate the later and more cowardly tyranny of his successor. And they may have considered it a good opportunity for testing anew the spirit and the power of their adversaries.

Accordingly, knowing perhaps that they had friends at court, such as Ezra himself, on whose influence they might rely, the prophets and princes, without waiting for any express sanction, took the matter into their own hands, and under their auspices, the people began again to build (Ezra v. 1-2). But their jealous rivals were on the watch and on the alert. They moved the provincial governor to interfere (ver. 3). He, being either more favourable, or at least more impartial, than those who had formerly arrested the work, listened to the answer which the Jews, pleading the decree of Cyrus, made to his inquiries; transmitted that answer to his master Darius, and determined to await his decision; meanwhile allowing the building to go on (Ezra v. 3-17). The decision of Darius, after searching the records, was to abide by the original decree of his predecessor Cyrus. So then was secured to the Jews full liberty to carry on their sacred work; none of their adversaries daring, at least openly, to make them afraid.

But of this favourable interposition, the people, as it would seem, were not so ready as might have been expected to take advantage. From whatever cause; the long delay, the frequent interruptions, the still remaining discouragements; their first love and zeal had begun to cool. In these circumstances, the prophet Haggai is sent to arouse them. And he does so very faithfully and very pointedly. Their excuse is somewhat plausible: "The time is not come; the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Hag. i. 2). Things are still too unsettled. The rage of our foes still secretly burns; their wiles are as unscrupulous as ever. Their influence at head-quarters is great. Then the king's patronage of us is but of yesterday; and therefore doubtful and precarious. Had we not better wait a little till we see how things turn out? Had we not better, for the present, proceed cautiously; giving ourselves to such work as will

attract less notice and give less offence, the providing of what all must acknowledge to be necessary for our own accommodation? By and by, when peace is more secure, and we have more leisure and more means, we will gladly resume the Lord's work, and set about it in right earnest. But the time is not yet.

The prophet has no patience with so hollow and so shallow an apology. Indignantly he retorts upon them in the Lord's name: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" (ver. 4). And he adds, in the same name, the exhortation, "Consider your ways" (ver. 5). Set your heart on observing your miserably selfish policy and its miserable fruit. You have been consulting for yourselves, your own ease and splendour, instead of having pity on the Lord's house lying waste! With what profit? To what issue? How sadly have you failed in securing your own selfish object! You have been visited with blight, famine, and disease. Your much sowing has yielded little reaping. Your meat has not been nourishing to you; nor your drink refreshing; nor your clothing warm; nor your gains enriching. That has been the effect. And what the cause? "Ye looked for much, and lo! it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house which is waste, and ye run every man to his own house" (ver. 9). But now consider your ways. It is not yet too late. "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it; and I will be glorified, saith the Lord" (ver. 8).

The prophet's warning is not in vain. The rulers, priests, and people "obey the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet (as the Lord their God had sent him); and the people feared before the Lord" (ver. 12). Their penitential compliance is at once graciously accepted.

Haggai's message now is one of peace and promise ; " I am with you, saith the Lord." And before the month is over, all hands and all hearts are busily " working in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God " (ver. 14). It is the Lord's doing. The Lord is glorified.

II. Haggai's second message (ii. 1-9) partakes more of the character of prophecy, in our modern acceptation of the term, than his first. And for a natural and obvious reason. The partially suspended labour is now resumed. It is resumed as a labour of love. Their cold and sluggish selfishness, that helped but very perfunctorily, if at all, in the building of the Lord's house, and scarcely kept it from an entire stop, so that the work dragged its slow lingering length along, while all their care was about their own houses, has given place, under the prophet's faithful and friendly dealing with them on the part of the Lord, to the zeal of godly sorrow and the glow of a fresh awakening. The labour is resumed ; not as a task, a burden, a weariness of the flesh ; but as a labour of love ; of much love springing out of a sense of much forgiveness.

But it is resumed under the cloud of sad memories of the past. The image of the old temple in its glory rises before the eyes of the builders of this new one. When that house was built, there was profound peace throughout all the borders of their undivided Israel. The wisest of Israel's kings had secured, by foreign commerce and powerful foreign alliances, the most ample means and advantages for carrying out the pious plan of his father David, and turning to the best account his munificent preparations. Silver was in Jerusalem as stones, and the most costly cedars as the commonest sycamores, for abundance. Then and thus arose that goodly structure, all beaming and burning with golden splen-

dour, which the patriotism and devotion of all Israel's children concurred in making them hold so dear.

Now all is changed. The feeble remnant of a dispersed people, scarcely recovered from long exile, almost strangers in the land of their fathers, poor in resources, surrounded by pitiless foes, often forced to work with sword in hand, have to rear, as best they may, a bare and meagre substitute for the temple which had been their nation's boast. No wonder that the tears of the old flowed afresh, and even young hearts were saddened, amid the shout of praise, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid; as Ezra so graphically and so tenderly paints the scene;—"Many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise thereof was heard afar off" (Ezra iii. 11-13).

In these circumstances, when the sad memory of the past mingles with the chequered joy of the present, the prophet has a word in season from the Lord for the people. And it is fitly a word prophetic of the future. He does not deny or disguise the inferiority of this new erection. He quite frankly and most feelingly admits it (ii. 3): "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" But admitting that, Haggai is very bold in encouraging rulers, priests, people (ver. 4): "Be strong, be strong, be strong, and work." And he gives strong enough reasons for this confident and courageous appeal.

There is the assurance of the Lord's continued presence among them as their covenanted God (vers. 4, 5): "I am

with you, saith the Lord ; according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you ; fear ye not." For what really made you fearless yourselves, and the cause of fear to all around you, in those better days on which you now look back ? What made you strong ? Not the magnificent house built for me by Solomon, but I, the Lord, who condescended to inhabit it ; as Solomon himself gloried in confessing, when he dedicated the house, and invoked my name in it ; nay not in it, but in that which it shadowed :—"Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place."

That ground of strength and fearlessness you had long before ; when a curtained tent of wood was the only symbol of my presence. You have it still, you may have it always, though in this new symbol you see what is little better than that tabernacle of old ; nay, though there should be no symbol at all, "I am with you." And I am with you on the footing, and in terms of that covenant of redemption which I made with you, when with blood of atonement and a strong arm of power I brought you out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage ; engaging you to be my people, and myself to be your God. My Spirit remaineth among you, to dwell in you, to work in you, to strengthen you with might in the inner man. Therefore, fear ye not.

The rather fear ye not, because, in connection with this very house, whose humble aspect, as contrasted with its former grandeur, may discourage you, there is to be the ushering in of a far better dispensation, more illustrious and more enduring than that which seemed to reach its climax when Solomon's temple was in all its glory. It may seem to be in its decline now, when so poor a substitute for that temple is all that can be found. But no. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the

dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come" (vers. 6, 7).

I have been shaking you, my chosen people, my nation ; shaking you from off your own land ; shaking you so as to overturn you, with your city and your temple ; turning you over among the heathen. And the shock has been so great that even the deliverance I have now wrought out for you, and the settlement I have given you in this land again, with city and temple in course of being rebuilt, fail to meet and redress the stroke. You call to mind the days of old, before this terrible shaking of you began ; and fain would you have nation, city, temple, as glorious now as then.

Nay, but rather look forward. See in prospect, bound up with this very house that seems so despicable, a state of matters far more glorious than any past prosperity. Another shaking,—“yet once more,”—a shaking, not of a single nation, you, my chosen people, but of heaven and earth and sea and dry land ; a universal shaking,—“removing those things that are shaken as things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Yes ; there is to be such “a shaking of all nations.” For “the desire of all nations shall come.” He whom not Israel alone, but all the nations need and long for, and fain would welcome, shall come ; to destroy whatever is temporary, shadowy, unreal, capable of being shaken and removed, whether in the arrangements of human society, or in the institutions of a divine yet imperfect economy ; and to set up a “kingdom that cannot be moved.” He shall come. And when he comes, then “I will fill this house with my glory.” For I am he that is to come, and this is the house to which I come.

For now the riddle is to be read, the mystery opened up. What is it that makes this house, in comparison with that former one, appear in your eyes as nothing ? Is it the

want of splendid adornments within and without? Is it the plainness of its outer walls and the homeliness of its inner furniture? Is it the lack of anything that means and money without stint might promise? Nay; if that were all, the deficiency need not last long (ver. 3): "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." But silver and gold are not needed to turn the tables in this comparison. Silver and gold apart, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and (or for) in this house will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts" (ver. 9).

For what, in the prophet's view, and in the view of earnest, spiritual men among the Israelites,—what really constituted the inferiority of this house? In what did it consist? Not in the absence from it of what silver and gold might provide, but in the absence of that which was the true glory of the old temple, as of the tabernacle which preceded it, the visible manifestation of the divine presence, the Shechinah, the emblem of the divine Majesty dwelling in the most holy place, between the cherubim, over the mercy seat. That was its chief defect, its only desideratum worth the speaking of or the thinking of. When this new house is reared, no splendid cloud announces Jehovah's coming to take possession of his new abode. He no longer shows himself in its sacred precincts. The people have to mourn a vacant temple and an empty shrine. But a higher glory is in reserve for it; a glory higher in respect of that very outward, palpable, visible manifestation of Jehovah's presence which constituted the first temple's real distinction and chiefest boast. "I will fill this house with glory." "In this place will I give peace."

It is the eternal Son, the Lord of the temple, the Jehovah of Old Testament worship, the Jesus of New Testament faith;—it is he who speaks. I appeared in my glory in that

old house. The Shechina symbol of my majesty shone all through it, and sanctioned in it a ministry of mercy. But it was only semblance and sign ; outward semblance, typical sign. In this house all is at last to be real. I am to fill it with my glory. Personally, I am to be in it ; manifesting forth my glory, as the Word made flesh ; the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. And I am to fill this house with my glory by giving peace in it. That is the greater glory of which Haggai speaks, as raising the temple then in building above that of Solomon.

The full meaning of the announcement the people generally might not then understand, as we may understand it now. We hear Jesus in the temple speaking words of peace, and we see him on the cross sealing to us that peace with his blood. We see this prophecy literally fulfilled—“Here I am personally to appear ; not in cloudy brightness, indeed, but in a real, living, human form and nature, which is far better. And here I am to appear, not only holding out the hope of peace in type, and figure, and promise, but actually giving peace, in my own person, as being myself the very righteousness of God for you, and the propitiation for your sins. ‘Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you.’ Thus I am to fill this house with my glory. And not merely thus, as giving peace ; but also, still further, as bringing in the final restitution of all things.”

How glorious, then, is this house, and how holy. Let none despise it or profane it. Wherever there is a house that is so honoured by the presence in it of the only giver of peace and the only restorer of the lost—be it the house or temple of an individual believer’s soul, or the church which is built for a habitation of God by the Spirit—let nothing unholy touch it.

III. The prophet’s third and last message (ii. 10-23) bears

upon this practical point. It enforces a lesson of holiness. It is ushered in by a formal consultation of the guardians of the temple's purity (vers. 11-13)—“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.” So these high authorities laid down the law of ordinances, the principle of the ceremonial institute; to the effect that uncleanness is far more easily and naturally communicated than holiness. The sacred flesh, which for sacred purposes a man may be reverently carrying in a loop of his flowing robe, will not impart its own character of sacredness to what it may happen to touch. But the slightest accidental contact of what is accounted unclean, as of one who is unclean by the handling of a dead body, is held to spread contagion and contamination. That is the law of outward or ceremonial holiness, as interpreted authoritatively by the priests. It is the prophet's function to give it a moral or spiritual application. And so he does, in a manner that is alike true and tender.

The people, it would seem, are in danger of tampering with impurity, tolerating pollution, in some mild form, perhaps, and some small measure. It may be that they are tempted to accept of offered help from doubtful quarters; to avail themselves of means and appliances not strictly in accordance with the holy law of God; and to silence their scruples in doing so by the consideration that, being themselves holy, and being engaged in a holy enterprise, neither they nor their work were in danger of taking much harm from the admission among them of some slightly contaminating element, if it could be turned to account for furthering

their good and godly cause. Thus there would come in arguments of expediency ; pleadings as to the extreme desirableness of getting on with what they have on hand as fast and as far as possible ; and pressing into the service all and sundry who may be willing to engage in it. What possible hurt can they do to us ? Nay, on the contrary, may not we be of some use to them ? Surely what is evil in them and in their ways cannot very seriously contaminate us, while what of good there is in us may be blessed to them ? It is a subtle snare ; besetting the church in all ages ; besetting all its members.

It is the snare of special pleading ; the so-called science of casuistry. May we not, to gain a holy end, let a little of worldly policy into our counsels, and some few worldly coadjutors into our circle ? It will meet so many difficulties, soften down so much opposition, and make our path and our progress so smooth and so rapid. The risk of evil to ourselves may be far more than compensated by the prospect of good lessons being taught by us to others, and good influences exerted by us on them.

Alas ! we need to learn the sad truth brought out by the consultation the prophet bids us have with the priests. They know that in their province, within the range of their functions as guardians of the purity of the ceremonial worship, the holiest thing a man can carry about with him upon his person will not sanctify by contact the commonest household article ; while one who has contracted the pettiest and most accidental taint of uncleanness will spread the contagion far and wide among all he meets with. So is it in the spiritual sphere. Therefore let the people beware. Let them remember the case of Achan. Let them lay to heart the proverb, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Let them rid themselves of any leaven of wickedness, any germ of iniquity, which they may have been cherishing or

allowing within their borders. Let them again consider their ways.

Yes ; consider what but lately you suffered (vers. 15-17), before you resumed so heartily your labour of laying stone upon stone in the temple of the Lord ; how you were disappointed in all your hopes, and smitten with judgments in all your works, because you turned not to me, saith the Lord. And consider (ver. 18) what is before you, how from this very day, the day of your fairly and faithfully applying yourselves to the building of the Lord's house, though as yet the harvest appears not, still the Lord has promised, and is beginning to bless you. Consider the judgment behind and the blessing before ; and learn that it is best to trust in the Lord alone, and cleave to the Lord alone, without going down to Egypt for help, or letting doubtful Egyptian men and doubtful Egyptian measures come in among you.

Better far, when tempted to yield to discouraging and disheartening thoughts, suggesting any such doubtful expedients of help or of relief, better accept the assurance and pledge which in his final message the prophet, on the Lord's part, once more gives (vers. 20-23) of the ultimate triumph of his people, and the ultimate completed beauty and glory of the temple they are building for him. He points the eye of their faith forward. He bids them fix it, moreover, on a single man ; the one great Priest of the temple, the King and Head of whom Zerubbabel is the representative ; the man Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; the signet, the seal of Jehovah's faithfulness ; his chosen one, in whom he delighteth, and for whose sake he will make Jesus alone a praise and rejoicing, and will fill all the earth as his temple with his glory.

For practical application, let me ask you to consider if there is not a close connection to be traced—a connection in the nature of things as well as by special divine dealing—

between your working for the Lord in the building of his house, and your own personal welfare ; the peace, prosperity, and progress of your souls, in the edifying of yourselves, the working out of your own salvation.

The three causes which are apt to hinder your faithful zeal in building for the Lord ; selfish sloth, content to get good, thinking it time for that, but not counting it time yet to be doing good ; unbelieving despondency, apt to despise the day of small things, to sit down and weep because the building which you have to help on now and here is nothing when compared with the building that went on once, or the building that is going on yonder ; carnal security, becoming tolerant of evil, thinking no harm can come from doubtful fellowships, and some partial concessions in the line of worldly expediency and worldly conformity ;—these cancerous sores, eating away all your heart for the Lord's work—are they not the bane also of your own spiritual life ? blighting to you the most plentiful means of spiritual nourishment and refreshment, stinting your spiritual growth, causing you, amid abundant promise of spiritual food, to starve and pine away ? The Lord will not, he cannot, bless you personally while you yield to these temptations to slackness in the business in which he would engage you ; the business of seeking out from amid the world's ruins stones for his living temple, doing what in you lies to build up Christ's spiritual house, to win souls to him, to feed his lambs and his sheep, helping them to abide in him.

Be strong and work, is his appeal to you. Say not "The time is not come." Think not the work too insignificant, anything you can do too trifling and mean to be acknowledged. Do what you can. Suffer not, touch not, the unclean thing, as if you might take your ease, and let holiness take its course as it may. Come out and be separate. Be up and doing, emptied of self, full of zeal for God ; not

underrating what he suffers you and enables you to do for him ; not doing it listlessly, as if it were not worth while ; but doing it heartily, as unto the Lord, who accepteth what you do, not according to what you have not, but according to what you have ; and finally, not giving way or giving in to evil, whether around you or within you, as if you could do nothing but allow things just to go on without much care or concern on your part about them. No ! rather resist unto blood, striving against sin. Be purged anew of uncleanness, and say—"Here am I, Lord ; send me."

Mark these three snares well ; snares alike fatal to your work for the Lord, and to your own welfare in the Lord. And mark them as the three successive stages or steps in a downward course.

First, there is the dilatory putting off, the sluggard's lazy begging, A little more sleep, a little more slumber. Time enough ! Time enough for this or that exertion, this or that sacrifice, this or that toil or trial ! Ah ! it is time, you admit, for your own selfish sloth to be gratified. "Soul, take thine ease." Ay ! and it is high time for you to awake out of sleep.

Then there is the feeble, querulous complaint of impotency, the affected pleading of your weakness, the uselessness of your doing anything, since you can do so little. Why bestir yourselves ? What have you in your power ? What, after all, is all that you can effect ? How far short of what you would deem worthy of God and of yourselves ! If you could do some great thing,—build a temple like the former,—you might have some inducement to exert your energies ! But so feeble and broken as you are, what can you do ?

Ah ! how near, in such a mood of mind, is the last landing-place in this sliding scale of declension ! How certain is the result ! You become listlessly, lazily, secure and self-confident ; indifferent, insensible, to the presence, the

power, the prevalence, of contaminating worldliness and ungodliness. For there is no security against acquiescence in evil but striving after good. Well did David pray in that 19th Psalm—"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let not them have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." And well also did he add, as his only security against the backsliding which he deprecated, the petition for grace to make positive attainments and positive progress in well-doing—"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer" (Ps. xix. 12-14).

XVIII.

THE RIGHTEOUS REWARD.

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”—HEBREWS VI. 10.

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”—HEBREWS XI. 26.

WHAT is said of Moses, that “he had respect unto the recompence of the reward,” may seem at first sight to detract from the disinterestedness of his conduct in refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God ; “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” There are devout men who sincerely think, or vaguely feel, that the admission of any such motive as an element in the Christian life is somehow inconsistent with the free grace of the gospel and the nature of evangelical obedience, as not a mercenary service for a remuneration, but a pure labour of love. And doubtless these two ways of walking with God may be broadly and generally distinguished, as differing from one another in spirit, in compass or extent, and in actual effect. The contrast between a servile and a filial submission to the divine will is to be always kept in view.

At the same time, there is risk of error in pushing the contrast too far, or applying the principle of it indiscreetly. There is the danger of a sort of sentimental morbidness.

For it has a certain air of loyalty and chivalry to stand upon the footing of not asking or accepting requital for any favour ; to decline all acknowledgment of service rendered or benefit conferred ; and to insist on whatever we do or give being out and out spontaneous and gratuitous. Between man and man, giving and receiving good, such a state of things is far from satisfactory. The state of mind which it indicates is neither generous nor gracious. There is pride, selfish and suspicious, on one side or other ; or on both.

To introduce any such feeling into the domain of personal piety is a still sadder and more fatal mistake. And yet it has been not uncommon. It has been frequently exemplified in the history of the church's inner life, in various forms of mysticism and pietism. But invariably the type is one and the same. It is the idea of such utterly unselfish, self-ignoring, disinterestedness in serving or submitting to God, as precludes all regard to one's own welfare, and all consideration of what one may receive as a prize at the hands of God. The tendency of all such ultra-sentimentalism and transcendentalism is to undermine the sense of obligation and responsibility. Hence accordingly, in its more common line of influence, it fosters the conceit of the natural mind. Our lips are our own. We are our own masters. Leave us to ourselves. Let us take our own method of expressing and proving our duty, gratitude, trust, and love. Let us not be tied down by precise rules. Let us not be dictated to, or forced, or bribed. Leave us at liberty. And let it be seen, if we will not, of our own accord, and not only without regard to ultimate personal advantage, but spurning all that away, be and do all that you could wish.

Before disposing of this somewhat plausible view, either in its higher spiritual aspect, or in its lower, it may be useful to consider, as on the side, not of man's sentiments, but of God's manner of dealing with man, and especially with

Christian or believing man, what is the principle upon which God proceeds in his dispensing of the recompense of the reward to which he would have us, like Moses, to have respect. That principle is brought out in the text—"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

The peculiarity lies here in the expression, "God is not *unrighteous* to forget your work and labour of love." It concerns, not his goodness and generosity merely, but his righteousness, that he should remember your good works ; to recompense and requite them.

There is, of course, one very obvious sense in which this statement may be said to be true ; to be indeed almost a mere truism. It may be considered as referring to the promises and pledges which God has been graciously pleased to give in his word ; to the effect that no service or sacrifice in his cause, and on his behalf, shall be unrequited ; that not the giving of a cup of cold water in his name shall in any wise lose its reward. God must redeem his pledges, and make good his promises. He is not untrue, unfaithful, unrighteous ; as he would be if he did not.

Very manifestly, however, such an interpretation, though sound so far as it goes, does not exhaust, if indeed it at all touches, the real meaning of the text. For the gracious act of God in not forgetting, but, on the contrary, remembering and recompensing his people's work and labour of love, is here represented, not merely as righteous on the ground of a pledge or promise on his part, but as righteous in itself. For the question is not on what principle God is simply righteous in doing a certain thing when he has freely bound himself in covenant and by promise to do it, and would be unrighteous if he did not do it ; but on what principle, whether he binds himself in covenant or not, it is a right thing for him to do

it, and would be an unrighteous thing not to do it. For that is what is affirmed when it is said "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Taking that view of the text, and considering the principle which it brings out generally, without regard in the meantime to the connection in which it stands, there are several interesting and affecting lights in which it may be placed.

I. God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love ; inasmuch as his doing so would be ungenerous, ungracious, unkind. Were he not to remember and acknowledge it, he might seem to be damping your zeal. In this view, the statement is fitted seasonably to cheer and encourage you. You are apt to be ashamed of the services which you render to him. They are so worthless in themselves, and so marred and stained with sin in the very rendering of them, that you can scarcely believe it possible for them to come up as prayer and alms, to be heard, and had in remembrance in the sight of God.

But now consider, as regards this matter, not what you deserve, but what it is becoming and worthy of himself that God should do. Few and faulty your best services may be ; unsatisfying to yourselves ; much more to your God. Well might he reject them all. But would he be justified in doing so ? Would it be in harmony with what he has revealed to you of the riches of his glory, and what he has made you to taste of the fulness of his grace ? I can conceive of an earthly benefactor taking pleasure in showing me his love ; and at the same time taking a perverse pleasure in mortifying every desire on my part to show my love to him. He may be vain and capricious ; or jealous and proud ; fond of the

assertion of superiority in bestowing a gift, and refusing to accept any sort of acknowledgment in return. Not such is the manner of God, it is not thus that he has been dealing with you ; receiving you graciously ; giving liberally and upbraiding not. And now, when he puts it into your hearts to long after offering to him some gift for all his benefits to you, can it be imagined that he should coldly or contemptuously ignore the gift ? No. He does not upbraid you with the value of his undeserved benefits to you. He will not upbraid you with the worthlessness of what you give to him. All that he bestows, he bestows in good faith. All that you render, he will take in good part. For he is not unrighteous to forget you work and labour of love.

II. God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love ; inasmuch as his doing so would be inconsistent with his faithfulness and truth. I do not now refer to his faithfulness and truth as keeping his promise and fulfilling his word. That is a human virtue ; rooted no doubt in the divine attribute of unchangeableness ; but still, I would say, merely human.

I refer to his faithfulness and truth in a higher view ; in the view of his sovereignty over you and his right of property in you. In that view, he is to be regarded as hiring you ; engaging you to be his servants ; and assigning to you your service. He does so, in the exercise of his own unquestionable discretion ; according to his own good pleasure, and the freedom of his own will. So he sends you into his vineyard. He does not leave it to you to devise a way in which you may, at your own discretion, manifest your loyalty. He welcomes you indeed as volunteers ; made willing by himself in the day of his power. But he enlists you as his soldiers and subjects, under command. You are to offer service

voluntarily. But when your offer is accepted, you are to obey orders.

This consideration may seem, in one view, to diminish or detract from any claim on your part for any recompense of reward. It divests your work and labour of love, which you show to his name, of the character of a spontaneous, or strictly self-prompted and self-directed offering. What you do or suffer is not at your own hand, but by his appointment.

But, in another view, the certainty of your being amply recompensed and repaid is thus placed on the highest possible ground. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant: I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. Thou hast broken every other yoke; and I take thy yoke upon me. I wait thy commands. What wouldst thou have me to do?" Such is the attitude of believing submission. It is not indeed an attitude so gratifying to my natural self-esteem, as that which I may once have been disposed to assume, when, in the exercise of my own independent liberty of choice, I thought of presenting an unasked and unpre-scribed gift, as if in compliment to my Maker and Redeemer, for his gifts to me. But it is a position safer far, and more becoming. I feel indeed that I have nothing which, as from myself, I can offer to my God. I am myself his property; his purchased possession; not my own, but bought with a price. And all that I have is his; by right of redemption his; as I am his. Nay, what have I that I have not received? Who am I that I should be able or willing to offer after any sort? All the store of talents and resources out of which I can offer comes from him, and is all his own. And I, his servant, must offer it, not as I choose, but as he desires and directs.

But does that thought, I ask again, detract in the least from my confident persuasion that what I offer will be

accepted and requited? Does it not, on the contrary, enhance my assurance tenfold? He makes me his servant. He assigns to me my work. He fits me for my work. And he is not unrighteous to forget my work. That he condescends to employ and engage me in work for him is a pledge of his purpose to reward me. That he does so employ me at all is great condescension on his part. He has no need of me. My goodness reaches not to him. And are not all the angels his ministering servants? Why should he engage me in his service? But he has engaged me. He does engage me. And that he may engage me wholly to himself, he breaks and cancels all other engagements. He commits himself to you, believers. Yes. To you he commits the honour of his name, the interests of his cause and kingdom, the well-being of his people, and of all his creatures. For it is as serving him that you do good to them. As being his servants alone, he insists on your having no other master. He hires you to be his; altogether his. All your time and all your treasure, every moment of the one, every mite of the other, he claims as his. And by all the sanctions of his absolute sovereignty; his rich, redeeming love; his free and all-powerful grace; he vindicates his right to have all the desires of your hearts and all the doings of your hands turned to account for his glory.

Would it be fair, handsome, honourable, for a master enlisting servants in such a way, on such terms, under such obligations, in such a service, to forget their work, to let it pass into oblivion, thankless and unrequited? Be it that it is work or service to which they are indispensably bound at any rate, and which they have no discretionary liberty to accept or decline; for which, therefore, they have no title to stipulate for payment beforehand, or to demand payment afterwards. Be it even that they understand that condition of their engagement, and consent to it, and are willing to reckon the

whole of their work to be a labour of mere love. That does not acquit or exonerate the master, in his own judgment at least, whatever they may think. If he is honest, upright, high-minded, he will not suffer his servants to entertain a moment's doubt of his intention to acknowledge their faithfulness, and make all the world know that he does so.

And is God unrighteous? Is he who solemnly binds you in so strict a covenant of service to let it be supposed that he can act unfaithfully or unfairly? Nay; so scrupulous is he, that even when he employs an enemy in any service, he punctually, not to say punctiliously, pays him for it. Because Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus, the Lord gave him the land of Egypt for his hire, to be the wages for his army (see Ezek. xxix. 18-20). And is he unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love; the work and loving labour of his chosen and his redeemed? Surely it is no vain thing, but rather a very blessed thing, for you thus to serve the Lord, having such a simple, single-eyed, meek, and honourable confidence as this in the truth and faithfulness of him whom you serve! You make no selfish or sordid stipulations. You strike no careful balance of consequences and calculations. You raise no nice and subtle points of claims and counter-claims. You ask no questions. Freely and fearlessly you cast yourselves upon the Lord, for the requital of your service, even as you cast yourselves upon him for the pardon of your iniquities; not doubting, but believing that as he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, so he is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.

III. There are other considerations of a general sort that might be brought forward to strengthen this quiet assurance. For instance, here is one. If, in one view, God commits himself to you; in another view he commits you and binds

you to himself. He commits you, if you are indeed engaged as servants in his house and kingdom, to a life of self-denial and of self-sacrifice. He brings you away from the fleshpots of Egypt ; the dainties of Pharaoh's table, the wealth and pomp of Pharaoh's court. And it is but reasonable to believe that he must indemnify you for any loss or damage you may sustain on his account. On this footing our Lord himself very plainly puts the matter.

When Peter says, "Lord, we have left all and have followed thee," being inclined almost to make a boast or make a merit of that self-improvement, as against the rich, or those who trust in riches, for whom it is hard to enter into the kingdom of God ; and when he adds the inquiry, "What shall we have, therefore ?" Jesus, partly to humble and partly to encourage, desires his over-officious if not over-anxious disciple to cease from being careful for anything, and to leave all to the Master. He will see to it, it concerns his righteousness to see to it, that "every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

So also, with reference to the persecution which the Lord had said must accompany, and, as it were, condition or limit the fulfilment of this promise, the apostle Paul makes the certainty of ultimate deliverance from it turn on the same sort of consideration : "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels."

In the service of God, if loyal and true, you must make up your mind to relinquish or forego not a few of those sources of pleasure and enjoyment which the world presents to you. And for whatever you may thus give up, he whom you serve may be expected, if he is to act worthily of him-

self, to provide some kind of equivalent. If you lose the favour of men, you have the favour of God. If you cease to have the peace which the world gives, when, with its refuges of lies, it soothes your conscience; you have the peace of God which passes understanding, the peace which Jesus gives, his own peace, which, when dying, he bequeaths and leaves to dying sinners. If you have to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye; maimed as you are and wounded, you enter into life. If the good things of earth are to be your treasure no more; you have better treasure in heaven, where no moth corrupts, and no thief breaks through to steal. You are prevented now from giving full scope, in the line of the world's pursuits, to that principle of your nature which prompts you to acquire and to accumulate. But it is the glory of the gospel that it does not propose to suppress a principle so powerful, and, in its place, so useful. Rather it turns it to good account. For the work and labour of love assuredly affords ample room and scope for its exercise.

Yes, ye believing and loving servants of the Lord! You are cut off from the calculations of earthly ambition and earthly covetousness. But the calculations of heaven are all before you; and in these you may be as ambitious and as covetous as you please. You are no longer at liberty to lay up for yourselves perishable riches. But of the riches which are eternal you never can lay up enough. You may go about your work and labour of love in the very spirit of one most sedulously, earnestly, vehemently, heaping up treasure. Only the treasure is in heaven, not on earth. And you may be very sure that the more you are expending your strength and substance for the Lord now, the larger will the store be growing of the recompense of glory and of joy awaiting you in the time to come. It must be so. For God is not unrighteous. He withdraws you in great measure from a field of labour in which your toil and trouble would have been

crowned with its due meed of success ; in which your diligent hand would have made you rich, and you would have had your reward. Must he not make up to you for that loss ? Must he not, in the new field in which he sets you to work, so proportion your reward to your diligence that you shall not have less to stimulate and encourage you in his service than you would have had in the service of the world ? Surely it must be so. For God is not unrighteous to forget.

Thus far, I have spoken of the recompense of the reward ; God's not forgetting your work and labour of love ; as simply righteous on his part. But, before leaving that topic, I must remind you that the righteousness is still always of grace.

It is the righteousness, not of law, but of equity. It gives you no such claim or title as you might enforce in a court of justice, by procedure of a legal sort. All your claim must rest upon the good faith or kind favour of the other party. This does not touch the certainty of your being righted and rewarded. But it divests you of all title to demand it or to reckon upon it as your due. How blessed a thing is it in this view, to disown all right of yours, and lean on the righteousness of God !

Further, the righteousness in question is not that of express compact, but rather that of a fair, reasonable, and amiable understanding. It is not a case, as between debtor and creditor, to be adjusted upon a balance of business accounts and books. Your remuneration is rather an honourable acknowledgment of the spirit in which you work, than an exact and formal discharge of the work itself. Hence, this principle, while it leaves no room for presumption on your part, leaves abundant room for the most large and liberal discretion on the part of God. He is not tied down by any minute and martinet rule, in dispensing his favours. He

may do according to his own pleasure, in bestowing his rewards on them that serve him.

It is this principle, substantially, which is brought out in the parable of the labourers sent successively into the vineyard. Why does the Lord pay so liberally the labourers hired at the eleventh hour? Why does he not make a distinction between them and those who had borne the burden and heat of the day? Is he unrighteous here? Nay! If those first called will stand upon their strict claim of right; pleading it, not for their own indemnification, but in bar of a benefit to their fellow labourers; the answer is clear and conclusive. No wrong is done to you. Take what is yours. All that you stipulated for, all that I agreed with you for, take. Much good may it do you in your present envious frame of mind! But is that jealous mind of yours to limit me in my bountiful dealing with those who, though called later into the field, are as ripe and ready for the reward, in my view, as, after all your long service, I find you to be? Nay! Are they not riper and readier even than you? Is your evil eye then to hinder the outflow of my goodness to them? You have what is yours; I do what I will with my own. And as I will not be unrighteous to forget, I will not be straitened in requiting any work or labour of love shown to my name.

Here I close with some practical applications of the truth I have been unfolding.

1. As God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, be not ye unrighteous to forget your duty to him. As he is, so to speak, on honour with you, be you scrupulously and sensitively on honour with him. Let your conscientious faithfulness in dealing with him correspond in some suitable measure to his generous faithfulness in owning and recompensing your work and labour of love. And, as it

is not according to any narrow, frigid, niggardly calculation ; but freely, largely, bountifully, munificently ; that he shows himself to be not unrighteous in rewarding you ; so let it be in the same liberal spirit, that you show yourselves to be not unrighteous in your work and labour of love towards his name.

Many motives should prompt this duty. Think on the way in which he receives you into his favour ; on the amazing sacrifice of his Son, whom he gives to the death of the cross, that he may reconcile you to himself ; receiving you graciously, and loving you freely. Consider how he treats you in his Son Jesus Christ ; as not servants merely, acquitted of blame and justified, but sons whom, in his Son, he loves, as he loves him. And say if you can be contented with rendering to such a God and Father a mere homage of necessity. He opens his heart to you. Will you not give your hearts to him ?

2. If God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love towards his name, you need not care to remember it. You need not keep a record of your doings. Your record and theirs is on high. You want no register of them here, on the earth. You may let them slip out of your memory.

And if they slip out of the memory of your brethren and friends, whom you may have specially obliged, and are overlooked or misconstrued by the world, you need not take that very much amiss. God is not unrighteous to forget them. It was towards his name that you meant to show your love. And is not his remembrance of that enough ? What more would you have ? Will it not be recompense of reward enough, when the Lord, at his appearing, reminds you of good offices done to his little ones ; which had escaped not only your recollection afterwards, but even your notice at the time ; when you ask, in astonished rapture,

“Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or thirsty, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and visited thee?” and when in answer you receive the marvellous attestation and acknowledgment of your work and labour of love, “Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”

3. For that is the kind of service, the work and labour of love towards God’s name, indicated in both of our texts. In the cases of Moses, it is his choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God. In the case of the Hebrew Christians, it is their having ministered to the saints, and still ministering. In both cases, what God is not unrighteous to forget, is sympathy with his people and ministration to their necessities. It is your love to them springing from his love to you. Your love, because he first loved you. And you manifest your love by words and deeds of kindly interest and active beneficence. Your fellow-men are the direct and immediate objects of your attentions and assiduities. You visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. You speak a word in season to the weary. You feed the hungry. You clothe the naked. You give a cup of cold water to the thirsty. And what you do to them, you do to the Lord. He counts himself to be your debtor on their behalf. And for him, as for you, “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

4. And what does he give? What is the nature of the recompense of the reward? It is not such as a mercenary, self-righteous worshipper would care for. It is not a prize won by merit. It is simply grace, more grace. What was it in the case of Moses? It was the reproach of Christ that he preferred to the treasures of Egypt. And it was Christ himself, seen, though invisible, that was his exceeding great reward. What was it in the case of the Hebrew Christians? What but security against the terrible backsliding of which the apostle warned them? “I am persuaded

better things of you, and things that accompany salvation." What but progress in the divine life and the assurance of that hope "which is an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, and that entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec"?

THE END.



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