

Bequeathed

to

The University of Toronto Library

by

The late Maurice Hutton,
M.A., LL.D.

Principal of University College

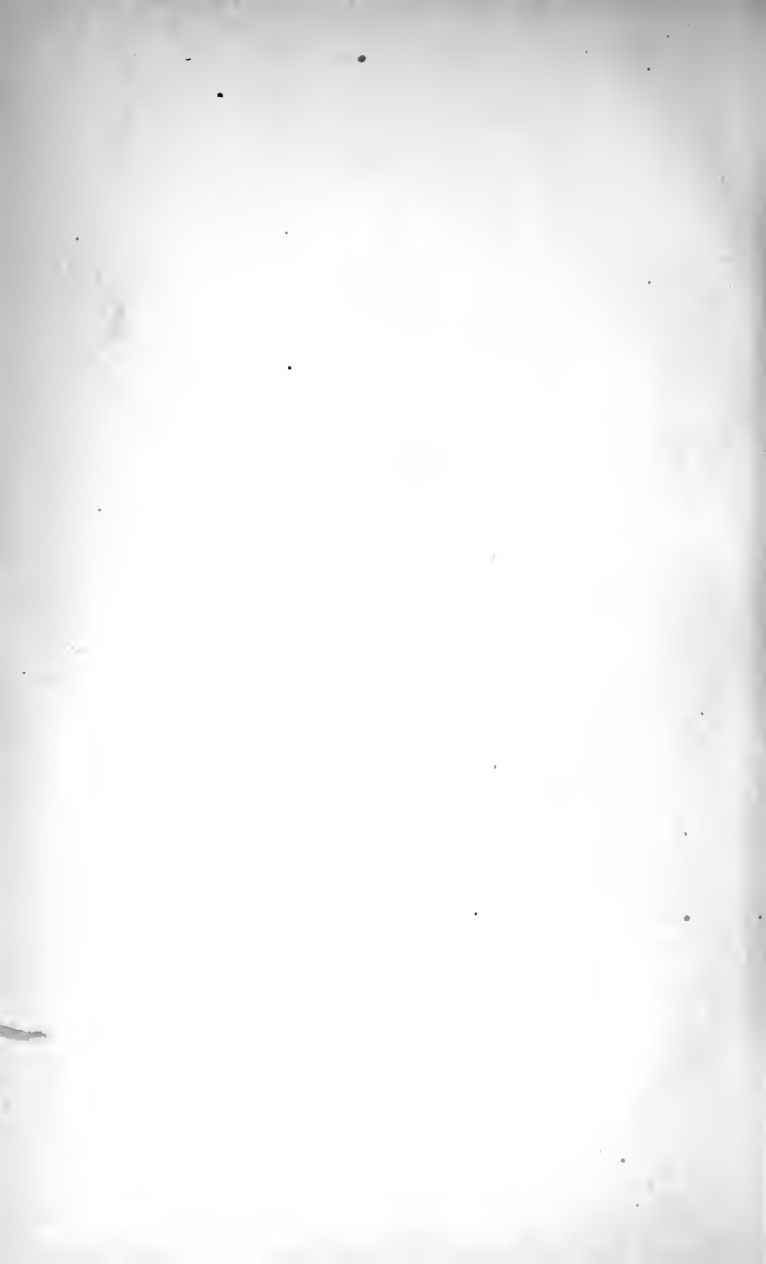
1901-1928

CARSWELL Co., Limited

Bookbinders,

PRINTERS,
LAW BOOKS,
PUBLISHERS, etc. TORONTO
ONT.





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

Bidder, Henry Jardine

'''

[Sermons.]

11 pamphlets or 1 vol

Oxford, Parker, 1892-1904

N 1111
B
'No Continuing City.'

A SERMON FOR THE DISILLUSIONED.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

Advent Sunday, 1891,

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

FELLOW AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,
AND VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD.

Published by Request.

391370
18.4.41

James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;

AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1892.

PRINTED BY JAMES PARKER AND CO.,
CROWN YARD, OXFORD.

'No Continuing City.'

HEB. xiii. 14.

'Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.'

THERE is this about the lives and histories recorded in Holy Scripture, that they are made the occasion for illustrating and expressing spiritual principles, which, just because they are truly spiritual, are of universal and eternal application. Thus it is that the writers of the New Testament again and again refer to the events and characters of the Old Dispensation,—not for the sake of elucidating facts, not for their merely historical interest, but on account of their spiritual significance; and whether the record was accurate, contemporaneous, authentic, or the more or less poetic redaction of a later age was a question which it never occurred to them to ask, and which could in no way affect their use and practice in the matter. This method of using the Scriptures is no doubt capable of abuse, and was, as we know, grossly and absurdly abused in the artificial system of allegorical interpretation, which later on took the place of that really spiritual insight into history which we find in the writings of S. Paul, or in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In spite, however, of all the follies and extravagances for which it has been made the excuse, the same method of spiritual interpretation must still be pursued by any one who would use, either for himself or for others, what is written for our learning, and thence draw lessons of patience and steadfast faith.

In the familiar passage from which we have taken our text the writer has been unfolding a lesson of this kind for those Jewish believers in our Saviour whose faith had hitherto been wrapped up and clothed in Jewish forms, and who now stood aghast and despairing when they beheld their Holy City destroyed, and the law, the priesthood—all they held most sacred—fast vanishing from their sight. They had pinned their faith, we might almost say, upon the stability of the Old Dispensation, and upon that message of God in the past to their fathers, of which Jerusalem and Jerusalem's worship were the outward pledge and embodiment. Our apostolic writer, however, tells them that all this stability and permanence was only illusory: it had survived no doubt many revolutions, many disasters; it had evinced a quite remarkable vitality and fixedness of tenure. But these qualities were only accidental and misleading: the true note of God's service is not permanence, but pilgrimage; on earth, at any rate, the highest end of man is the pursuit, and not the enjoyment, of Rest, 'for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.'

This morning our endeavour shall be to apply the same lesson to ourselves in view of those trials and alarms which more especially beset Christian people to-day, under the belief that what this writer said of the material temple and city of Jerusalem is equally true of those intellectual and spiritual structures in which the human soul has housed itself from time to time during the course of its pilgrimage. Often these houses have seemed so secure that it has grown to think that they will continue for ever, to look upon them as its only and its final home; and when, as in the present generation, these are rudely shaken, some there are who are ready to bury themselves in the ruins of the past, whilst there are many more ready to cry 'who will any longer shew us any good?'

Now, to a great extent, Disillusionment is a characteristic common to every age, just as it is a phenomenon incidental to the path and progress of all knowledge. On the one hand it is of the very nature of Science to form theories in which to sum up and express the results of past discovery, and, on the other hand, just because in all Science we only know in part, the advent of fuller knowledge is ever doing away with and superseding the old. So it is also with the social and political history of different races. For generation after generation they grow and flourish beneath the shadow of their respective Beliefs and Institutions until these seem the necessary and unchanging conditions of their existence ; but sooner or later an era of change arrives, as it came to the Feudal System, as it came to Monarchy, as it will also surely come to Democracy, and what once seemed perfect, salutary, permanent, is found to 'wax old and ready to vanish away.' There are many questions of this kind being agitated at the present day in newspapers, books, and magazines, in the club and the workshop ; they relate to the State, to the family, to trade and to commerce ; and with these we are not called upon to deal from this place. But there is also (who can shut his eyes to it?) another sphere which touches us more closely as Christian men and women, and upon which it may not be out of place to offer some counsel, or, at any rate, some reflections.

In the first place, we must observe that whether the Disillusionment be justifiable or not, whether it be well grounded or due to caprice, yet the fact remains that in the religious world a general sense of Disillusionment does prevail. The common run of men and women do not yield the same unquestioning respect to the traditional beliefs and traditional restraints which have controlled the past. They regard these as open to discussion and criticism, even if not as already discredited. They

allow themselves a latitude, both of speech and conduct, in respect of them, at which our fathers would have shuddered. To take only the two fundamental constituents of our religious life, the Bible and the Church, it is only the blindest fatuity which can ignore the change that has come over our views and estimate of their authority. Biblical criticism has usurped so large a measure of attention, it has dazzled the reading public with such startling, if not brilliant, conclusions, that the *Holy* character of God's Word is in danger of being forgotten or denied; and any one who really takes the trouble to get into touch with his fellow-men, educated and half-educated, and honestly tries to gauge their opinion, must, I think, admit that the views hitherto formulated and current concerning the Church and the Ministry, concerning the efficacy of Ecclesiastical rites and sacraments, are no longer really believed, even though they may still form the rallying cry of partizans.

The claims of the Church in the past have been definite enough,—to be a supernatural channel of grace and a store-house of merit which her ministers can alone dispense; and they in turn have not been slow to claim for themselves a corresponding character. They have appealed to their office and to the mode of their Ordination as a proof of the truth and authority of their doctrines, and for the efficacy of their ministrations. Even when they have appealed to reason and argument it has been as those who would seethe the kid in its mother's milk, with a view to put Reason to silence and tune the voice of Conscience to that Authority which they claim to represent. And, however plausibly these claims may be disguised, they are not altogether unknown in our own Church, and in our own day. So desperate, however, have become their chances, that the maintainers of ecclesiastical authority and tradition are found ready to make the wildest sacrifices,

the most incongruous alliances. They will combine with the Socialist or the Trades Unionist ; they are even ready to recognize as a blessing in disguise the extreme results of Modern Criticism, under the idea that thereby 'it is becoming more and more difficult to believe in the Bible without believing in the Church : '—by which I suppose we are to understand that the Bible *per se* has no divine message for mankind, that if it is to instruct and to ennoble, it must first be certified and then be interpreted and used by the Church. In a word, they are willing to part with almost every other illusion, if only they can revive and extend the authority of Sacerdotal Institutions.

We only require to stand apart from these controversies and to take a calm dispassionate view of the situation, in order to see the extent to which this sense of Disillusionment is in the air. We see that, without exactly knowing why, without appreciating the 'pros' and 'cons' of argument, the men and women around us imbibe insensibly from the books and controversies of the day, yes, and from the apologetic tone of the pulpit itself, a conviction more powerful than any explicit argument to the contrary can hope to be, that old beliefs are ready to vanish away, that old Institutions will decay and perish, or at any rate will lose their hold upon the rising generation. And when we remember that all the soundest part of our national life and character has been bound up, even if it has not directly depended upon these, that in point of fact (though, theoretically perhaps, not of necessity) all our morality both public and private, and the sanctity of the family and home has been based upon reverence for the religion of the Bible and the influence of the Church, the outlook surely is grave in the extreme. To illustrate, however, the consequences which threaten us, I will not indulge in what perhaps you might be inclined to discount as mere clerical stock-in-

trade ; but I will venture to quote the words of an eminent French writer, lately deceased, who will scarcely be suspected of holding a brief for Christianity. Octave Feuillet puts the following deliberate judgement into the mouth of a free-thinking man of Science, who evidently expresses his own convictions : ' A man of birth and education who resigns himself to unbelief may still for a while find himself upheld by the principles which were instilled in his early education and by the *convenances* of Society. But the sentiments of duty and moral dignity, having in reality no longer any foundation, grow fainter and fainter. Life has for him only one substantial aim, viz., the enjoyments however base they may be, which he finds nearest to hand. And so under a veneer of civilization he descends by little and little to the moral level of the lower savage ; even his intellectual faculties lose their original power ; he has lost his hold upon what is refined and spiritual in life. In literature his reading tends to confine itself to newspapers and novels ; in art he is only interested in what is gross and material ; even in the theatre it is only what appeals to the senses that attracts him ^a.'

In short we are in danger of seeing the old Tragedy of Faust realized on a national scale ; and while the spirits of the past bewail the fair world destroyed by the modern intellect, the voice of the Tempter is not unheard among the children of to-day inviting them to cast aside the old restraints, the old ideal, the old hopes, and to settle down into the solid incontrovertible enjoyments of the senses. And, however strong may be our own sympathies with the weeping spirit of the past, yet we must remember that it is the present with which we have to deal and which bears the Future in its womb. Neither must we suffer ourselves to be deceived or lulled into any false security by a few temporary successes, such as the

^a From his 'La Morte.'

partial retention of elementary education in religious hands (for children grow into men and read the news and literature of the day), nor yet by any statistics of church building, church attendance and such like evidences of paper progress so dear to the hearts of ecclesiastical functionaries. God's servants must produce some bolder and surer remedy from their resources if they are to meet the situation ; and if we would find an adequate answer for our own souls we must face the actual present and look forward to the future, instead of casting lingering glances after the past.

Now at first sight it might seem possible to meet this condition of Disillusionment by direct argument. In a great many cases old opinions have been abandoned without any adequate grounds, or at any rate with no real knowledge or study of what is urged against them. As a mere question of dialectic, the defence of the supposed illusion is often easier and more plausible than the attack. This is certainly the case with the authenticity of the various books of Scripture, where the enquiry is of the most subtle and delicate character ; and even where the arguments are not so evenly balanced (as in the case, say, of ecclesiastical authority), any one who is minded to cherish his old illusion need be at no loss for specious and even learned arguments. But the truth of the matter is, that for better or worse the common run of men and women have neither the ability to comprehend, nor the patience to follow, nor yet the will to be convinced by mere weight of argument. They go by impressions : they are determined by what they imagine to be the general tendency of things, so that when once the general impression has spread abroad, when once the verdict of public opinion has been pronounced that old positions are no longer tenable, it is really of very little use repeating to deaf ears either old arguments or new ones to shew that they are.

The advice which we would offer to persons who labour under this vague and general conviction of Disillusionment is very different. We should rather be inclined to say to them, "*You are not disillusioned enough.*" You may be quite satisfied that the old beliefs about the Bible and the Church and the Sacraments in which you have been brought up are now exploded:—whether this would be a matter for rejoicing or lament we will not here stay to enquire: but are you quite sure that you ever understood, or even now understand, what those beliefs are? To the other mistakes from which you have been aroused, must you not add the mistake of ever supposing yourself to have seen clearly what you did believe? Were you not all along misled, and are you not still misled, by superficial descriptions and popular confusions into supposing that those traditional rites and symbols were the real and spiritual beliefs by which men lived, nay, by which you yourself were in the way of being influenced?

We are going to draw a distinction, you see, between the mere external theory in black and white in which, for want of a better, believers have expressed themselves, and the spiritual faith which was their real support. Men often confuse the two: they fight for the husk, and find they have lost the kernel; and again they fall into needless despondency, or indulge in unfounded triumph, as the case may be, because they fail to recognize the kernel when the husk is gone. So we say that perhaps the last and greatest illusion of all has still to be removed in the case of our disillusioned friends. But in order that this may be done they must look elsewhere for light than to public opinion or the last new criticism. They must turn their eye inward, they must question their own consciences and try to come to an understanding with themselves as to what religion, what faith in

God really means to them. If they did this, I think they would find that the true core and kernel of religion remains as true and precious as it ever was before; that it is no way affected, that it is not even attacked by the criticism before which the old Bibliolatry and ecclesiastical pretensions have gone down; that true faith—the faith which has lain at the foundation of all good and holy lives, nay, what little active faith we ourselves have ever experienced,—was something quite different, and quite separable from the credulity which blindly accepts the decrees of authority and tradition. With this baser metal indeed true faith has often been combined, often confused in the minds of good men; for it they have fought and contended, as though they were contending for the faith which they felt to be their life; oftener still the acceptance of some external dogma and symbol has been substituted for a living faith, simply because it is so much easier to acquiesce in some tangible production in black and white, or to be guided by a living visible Authority, than to feel your way, dependant upon the Unseen. Each of these—every creed and symbol, every authority and power—has had its use for the time; each has been some resting-place for pilgrim souls; each has been, for some generations of men, a living expression for the faith that was in them. They were this indeed, and therefore they deserve our grateful reverence, but they were no more. They were not of the essence of true faith.

When, therefore, people pretend that their Religious Faith is gone, just because they have come to doubt or to see through the false pretensions of the Church, or the thoughtless uncritical use of the Bible,—they are like children who have learnt their lesson in Geometry without understanding it, and break down if the letters are varied or the diagrams reversed. And surely this illustration is both apt

and suggestive. For just as a wise teacher would gradually lead on his pupils to understand and grasp more firmly the truths of geometrical science by varying the figures and letters, or by propounding problems, until their unintelligent acquaintance with the letter had been superseded by an increasing insight into principles,—so through all the crises and changes in the outward history of the Church's Creed we can trace the hand of a Divine Master leading His children on to understand better the faith that is in them by teaching them to separate the accidental and temporary from what is essential and eternal. And, as one unsettlement succeeds another, we recall the 'yet once more' of ancient prophecy which 'signifieth,' as our Epistle teaches, 'the removal of those things that may be shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.'

If, then, we only have courage to face this bug-bear of Disillusionment, if only we are true to ourselves, to our faith in God, and to the presence of His Holy Spirit among His people,—then we shall still look forth upon the world and its history as the field and expression of a Father's love, leading us by paths which at first we knew not, but which we slowly learn to understand. If in our own hearts and lives we have learnt to see that what really enlightens, guides, and supports us is not the letter, not the tangible or picturesque elements of religion, but the spiritual truth which they veil—if, in a word, we can, like those patriarchs, recognize the voice of God above the din and confusion of the world, then every stage of Disillusionment, every call to go forth from the old resting-places, becomes yet another appeal to our faith. We look back and understand that the old mechanical theory concerning the Inspiration of Scripture, the supernatural authority of a Church, the magical theory of sacramental grace, were only unconscious accommodations, the

temporary husk in which believers endeavoured to clothe, and in some measure to explain and present to their imaginative faculties, the beliefs upon which they lived and depended ; we learn that the vital power and value of the Bible never depended upon the authorship of its various parts, that men may be as really inspired in the conscious and active use of their natural faculties as they could ever be by being made the passive instruments, the Æolian harps through which the breath of God made Music. All these we see to have been mere illusions, or modes of representation in which men have unconsciously tried to make clearer for themselves and others the belief which we still hold, viz. that God has spoken to man and does hold converse with the human soul.

Again, as the Bible is the first record of this fact, so the Church has been its living witness through the succeeding generations of mankind, and the Sacraments are the actual and present occasions in which individual men and women can realize, each for himself, a living and a present God. For this faith,—for this confession of Dependance, this claim to hold intercourse with God—for this we say men have also built up various homes and resting-places in their thought-world. Many of these have been from time to time already recognized as mistaken and temporary, although here and there we meet with believers and fellow-pilgrims who cling to the old mediæval and patristic illusions, even as Rachel clung to her father's teraphim and tried to hide them in Jacob's tent. But what is true of illusions all but universally admitted to be such, is true also, we say, not indeed of the Inspiration of the Bible, but of those particular theories in which our forefathers expressed this belief, and tried to explain to themselves the great mystery *how human words could nevertheless be Divine*. And the same distinction between the reality and the illusion

enables us to take a just view of Ecclesiastical claim: no one who does not possess the effrontery of Ignorance would pretend that his knowledge of God's Truth and God's Will was independent of that great body of Christian believers throughout the world of which he is a member, any more than he could maintain that the present is independent of the past, or that we have power to cut ourselves off from our intellectual or religious heritage and begin afresh for ourselves. And the great historical Churches are the outward and visible embodiments of this heritage. In this sense they are still to be justly regarded as Sacraments of Continuity, as channels of Grace; whilst the claims of their officials to possess a supernatural authority or to impose limits and to tie down the Spirit of God, which bloweth where it listeth, to their own machinery, are to be repudiated as illusions of the past, built up out of the intellectual and moral materials of a bygone age. The authority of the Church and her ministers may and does indeed still remain, but no longer grounded upon what is irrational and material, no longer limited and defined by a particular line of succession or ordination by outward rites, but by their own faith, their own insight into God's Truth, and the spiritual power they have thereby gained upon the souls and consciences of their fellow-men.

A few words still remain to be spoken in view of the regret and dismay which we all must feel more or less deeply, when we see our oldest and most cherished strongholds fading into the past. Sad and painful as every wrench must be, still we say to the strong believer they are not without their own consolation, and hope of rejoicing. If we too are called to go forth as our fathers were before us from what once seemed the permanent citadels of our faith, is it not one more proof of our spiritual nature and kinship? In this

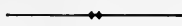
rising discontent, this inability to rest satisfied with what satisfied us once, can we not hear the soul's true whisper declaring plainly that it seeks a better country, that is, a heavenly? It matters not that the conclusion brings little consolation to those lower instincts of our nature which are ever seeking ease and immunity from exertion : of this we have no right to complain. But neither, it may be objected, does it satisfy those higher hopes of an Eternal Rest for the people of God which are implied in the whole Gospel and directly encouraged in our Epistle.

Well, to such a Rest, we reply, we do right to look as to our ultimate end and goal, yet at the same time we surely err if ever we are tempted to count it as already attained or even as attainable, so long as we are in this world, nay, perhaps, so long as we retain a separate and individual existence. So long as we are what we are, struggling and broken scintillations of the Divine Reason, the good and the true alike must for us continue as something beyond, something still to win. On reflection we cannot so much as conceive it otherwise. All individual life, as far as we know it or can define it, is found to consist in change of state; and this, which is true of all bodily life, is equally true of that conscious life which we call the Soul :—'there is no consciousness,' says the psychologist, 'which is not consciousness of change.' The knowledge which ceases to grow, even that knowledge of God wherein standeth Eternal Life, soon ceases to be knowledge at all, and degenerates into the bare possession of lifeless Dogma, the exuvixæ and evidence of a life that once was but is no more. Belief then in a final rest in which our present individual life will be absorbed, may be legitimate as a regulative idea or ultimate vanishing point, towards which our thoughts theoretically tend; yet for practical purposes the path to it is what we have to consider, and that path is one of

Infinite Progress. Infinite Progress again is the only form under which we can conceive the Immortality of the Individual Soul, and Infinite Progress means that here we have no continuing city. We must be ever ready to go forth not knowing as yet indeed whither we are going, yet sure of this, that we are not as those who set forth on a lonely and a cheerless journey. For what the Lord Jesus said to the twelve Apostles on the eve of His departure from them is still spoken to each Christian soul. Wherever we are led by His Spirit, whether in the body or out of the body, whether in this world or a world to come, we shall ever be within the Father's House, the Father's Kingdom. Therein He tells us there are not one but many resting-places, many stations which mark the onward progress of the Soul, but in all we shall find tokens of the Saviour's Presence and the Saviour's Love—as He said, 'I go to prepare a place for you.'



*The Fitness and Efficacy of our Saviour's
Passion.*



A SERMON

PREACHED IN SUBSTANCE AT S. GILES',
On Passion Sunday,

AND

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

On the Second Sunday after Easter, 1892.

BY

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

VICAR OF S. GILES', AND FELLOW OF S. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD;
SELECT PREACHER, 1890-92.



James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;
AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1892.

NOTE.

THE text and general outline of the following Sermon were suggested by one of Schleiermacher's. The argument, however, is independently developed, and was designed to meet the difficulties which an old friend had expressed upon the doctrine of the Atonement.

The Fitness and Efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.

LUKE· xxiv. 25, 26.

'Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?'

IN these words our Saviour invited His disciples, after His Resurrection, to contemplate the Mystery of Redemption, and to see in His sufferings and death not the melancholy termination of their hopes, but the necessary prelude to His glory, and the fulfilment of the secret counsels of Deity. A mystery it must indeed have been to them, and though now made manifest and familiar to us by the light of Christian history, a mystery it is still rightly styled by us, because it was something which ran dead counter, and still runs dead counter, to all the natural expectations and predilections of mankind, because it reversed and still reverses all human judgments as to the nature of God, as to the nature of the good. And, moreover, we call it the central mystery of our Faith, because it not only distinguishes the Christian conception of God from all other theologies, but is also what elevates Christianity above all other religions of the world.

For as our text clearly implies, we are not here dealing with any accidental feature of the Saviour's life contingent upon

the circumstances of His earthly existence. In the words, 'Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' we recognize the consciousness of a profound necessity within His nature, of a condition which He had to fulfil as the Christ and King of men. It is true that in order to illustrate this necessity to the disciples, and in order to bring it home to their understandings, He referred them to the Old Testament Scriptures, 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets;' but surely it would be a very frigid and mechanical method of interpretation which would find in any such correspondence the real ground of the Saviour's Passion. No, when we say, or when the evangelists say, 'all this or that was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled,' we speak of an incidental result, not of the real cause or motive of the transaction. We have but to push back our question one step farther and to ask why are such prophecies found in the Scriptures, in order to see that both prophecy and fulfilment must have the same ultimate ground in the Counsels of God. Because it was part of the Divine Wisdom, therefore in the fulness of time it came to pass; and if prophet or psalmist spoke of it beforehand, this was because in His good providence God vouchsafed to bestow upon His servants so much insight into His nature and counsels, that they might prepare the minds of His people to recognize their final accomplishment.

But our Saviour not only tells us that His sufferings were necessary; He also defines the necessity. They are mentioned in closest connection with, and apparently as a preliminary condition of entering into 'His Glory.' Our subject, therefore, will naturally divide itself into two heads:—

1. What is the glory which Christ here claims as His?
2. How did it or how does it result from His sufferings?

1. At the mere mention of Christ's entrance into glory an obvious and hasty inference is at once suggested, viz., that as the earthly life and sufferings and death constituted the humiliation of the Eternal Son, so His glory consisted in nothing else but His Ascension into heaven. On a more thoughtful consideration, however, of who and what He was who spoke thus of Himself, this first and superficial conclusion will not be found to satisfy the case. For what gain, what increment of glory accrued to the Son of God on His Ascension beyond that which He possessed from all eternity? or, if we contemplate Him on the human and earthly side of His existence, what greater glory is conceivable for the Son of Man than that which was His during all His life on earth—complete and unbroken union with God? Can anything more glorious be asserted of any being than this—that He is One with the Father of Spirits and Creator of all things? There was then no glory lost by Christ which either His sufferings or Ascension restored; for His true and spiritual glory as the Son of Man who was also One with God had never suffered diminution, and the Majesty of God was His before and without the Humiliation. And beside these internal considerations derived from the Saviour's utterances concerning Himself, it is not likely that He could have intended His Apostles to understand Him as speaking of His Ascension, when as yet He had made no explicit revelation on the subject, and when therefore no such conception could have been present to their minds.

But though at the time they may well have wondered and doubted of what their Master was speaking, yet if we read on to the end of the chapter we shall find that on the evening of the same day He Himself returned to the subject and set the question at rest both for them and for us. Then (verse 46) 'He

‘opened their understanding:’ He repeated again what He had asserted as to the fitness and necessity of His sufferings, and by a significant variation of phrase explained what that glory was, of which He had spoken in the morning. ‘Thus ‘it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead . . . ; *‘and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached ‘in His Name among all nations.’* Here surely we can recognize the same conception and the same anticipation of glory which found utterance on the night of the Betrayal: ‘Now ‘is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;’ and earlier still, when the desire of certain Greeks to see Him had foreshadowed that universal power of attraction which He was to exert over the souls of men from His Sovereign Throne upon the Cross, ‘Jesus answered them saying, The ‘hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.’ We note also that it substantially agrees with that outcome of glory upon which S. Paul dilates in his Epistle to the Philip-pians:—‘Wherefore,’ i.e. as the direct result of His humiliation and death, ‘hath God highly exalted Him, and hath ‘given Him a Name which is above every name: that at ‘the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue ‘confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the ‘Father.’

It is indeed a glory which no natural understanding, no theological system could have anticipated: but oh! when once revealed, how far does it transcend every human and material standard of estimation! for what higher claim or title can any name possess to the adoration and obedience of men than that by it and in it should be preached Repentance? that by it should be brought about the Conversion—the turning round and rescue of mankind—from the transitory, the vain, the corruptible, to what is true, Eternal and Divine?

that through that name should be preached Remission of Sins, the removal of all that kept or can keep the sons of men from their heavenly Father, and their recall to filial love? The shallow and childish imagination of man is prone to be struck only by what is outwardly miraculous, and to seek in the portent or supernatural sign for the proof and realization of Christ's glory. But not for such did the Saviour of men long and labour; not for that did He endure the Cross and despise the shame. The glory for which He travailed was to dwell by faith in the hearts of men; no longer to animate a single individual form upon the earth, but to live as the inmost soul and life of all who believe in His Name and have learnt to say with S. Paul, however timidly, however unworthily, 'Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me!' This extension of His Life in the Church and the ultimate pervading and raising of the whole conscious life of the world by His mighty indwelling Presence, this is the True right hand of Divine power to which our Saviour ascended; this and nothing less was the glory for which He was content to suffer, to rise again, and finally to remove His bodily presence from the earth.

Moreover, dear Christians, as He then spake of His glory as of something into which He had still to enter, so even now this glory still awaits completion. Repentance and remission have still to be preached in His Name, and He still summons all believers to labour on for His glory. Therefore it is well that we should also clearly understand the mysterious connection between the Saviour's death and the Saviour's glory, or, in other words, how His Death and Passion have led, and still have power to lead, men to Repentance and Forgiveness.

2. In approaching this, however, the second division of our

subject, let us be warned by the follies and perplexities into which past generations of believers have been betrayed by thinking to know too much. Surely there are grounds for hoping that we are beginning to see a more excellent way, that we are beginning to distinguish the practical from the speculative treatment of such subjects, and in both to learn truer methods and juster limits to our enquiries. Speculative Theology, unless we are mistaken, is fast entering upon the same stage which the Sciences of Ethics and Metaphysics have already attained. Like them, its subject matter is seen to consist in notions rather than in realities, i.e. in the thoughts of men about their relations to God, and in the various solutions that have been offered for the problem of the world and the destiny of man; and like all sciences, which deal with the life and thoughts of men, its true method is seen to be the historical. This result has in Oxford been forwarded, though of course unintentionally, by the religious movement of the last half-century, of which the best and most enduring intellectual result will probably be found in the interest which it has awakened in the development of Christian institutions and doctrines. Once begin to study and compare conflicting or successive systems of doctrine, and it soon becomes impossible any longer to write or argue as if the absolute truth of God's nature or redemptive providence was the privileged possession of a single body or of a single age. Here, as elsewhere, we learn that Wisdom is justified of all her children, and that the theologian's task is not to hold a brief for one side or another, but to enter sympathetically into every phase of thought;—to understand what each obscure school of heresy was trying to express, and to trace how, by a process of spiritual selection, the truest and most comprehensive doctrine, the doctrine which did most justice to

the wants and difficulties of men survived in the Catholic Faith.

On the other hand, in the practical treatment of theological questions such as we are at present attempting, the Dogmatic method is more and more giving place to the Experimental. This change (in turn) we owe in a great measure to what is known as the Evangelical Movement, which, whether within or outside of the Established Church, supplemented a somewhat cold and narrow system of doctrine by that appeal to facts of life and of spiritual experience which became known and recognized by the name of Experimental Preaching. After all it was of course nothing new: it was but a return to the living methods of Christ and His Apostles in an age when Religion had grown cold and dead: it was but exchanging the ambition to penetrate God's eternal and, as some say, conflicting counsels of Mercy and Justice for the resolve to know one thing only—Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Long ago Luther maintained the superiority of the same method, and appealed from the dogmas of theologians to the personal revelation of the Son of God. He is commenting upon the saying recorded by St. John, 'This is eternal life, to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.' 'Mark! he says how Christ intertwines and unites the knowledge of Himself and of the Father, so that the Father can be known only in and through Christ. For I have often said this,' he continues, 'and I may say it again, so that even when I am dead it may be remembered, and men may beware of all teachers as guided by the Devil, who begin by first teaching and preaching of God alone and apart from Christ^a.' It is indeed an idle mockery to profess our belief that 'Jesus is God' if we look elsewhere for God's nature and

^a Quoted by Luthardt, 'Saving Truths,' notes on Lecture VI.

character than to the Life and Words and Cross of Jesus. Oh! if men would only be content to get their doctrines there, to begin there and to end there, the Atonement would indeed appear no less a mystery of Divine Grace, but we should find nothing in it, when once revealed, to perplex either our reason or our conscience. If we want to know how and on what terms God forgives, search and see how Jesus forgave. When He spake the words of forgiveness to Mary Magdalene, when He promised eternal bliss to the dying thief, was anything said about substitution or any other terms of pardon? Did He ever speak of His Father in Heaven as the theologians have spoken of Him? Did He ever describe Himself as a victim to propitiate an offended God? Did He ever betray any consciousness of that dilemma betwixt justice and mercy which some have attempted to define and solve with such exactitude? No, from first to last the Gospel of Jesus was a free Gospel,—not indeed in the sense that those who accept it are under no obligation to live a new and dedicated life,—but in the sense that the forgiveness which it offers and the Salvation which it bestows are the free, ungrudging act of God, whether we contemplate Him as the Eternal Father, or as manifesting His Being and character in the Son of Man.

Why, then, it may be asked, if we abandon the old *à priori* and dogmatic position, was it necessary for Christ to die? why are Reconciliation and Forgiveness so closely connected, as they are in our text, with His Death upon the Cross?

To these and such like questions I believe a far more satisfactory and more practical answer can be reached by the experimental method. Instead of laying down and arguing from the principles upon which Almighty God may be supposed to act, we must rather begin by examining the

authenticated declarations of Christ, and observe the actual working and effect of the Saviour's death upon the souls of men, and upon our own. By this method, as I believe, we shall arrive at more cogent reasons for recognizing and adoring the depths of Divine Wisdom, and more powerful incentives to our gratitude and love than can ever be supplied by the artificial elaboration of Dogma.

To begin with, we observe that what our Saviour actually implies in our text is not that His death was the condition of pardon, but that only through it could the message of repentance and remission be effectively preached. This agrees with what He had said before about the seed corn which must first perish in the ground before its life can be multiplied, and about that lifting up which should draw all men unto Him. So that taking His own declarations, we are justified in saying that His death is represented rather as the efficient cause of our faith than of the forgiveness which follows upon that faith. Although, therefore, we assert, as the Scriptures assert, that the Sufferings and Death of Jesus are the means and the only means by which forgiveness, reconciliation, and atonement are brought within the reach of man, we have no right or reason to assert that Almighty God could not or would not pardon sin without it, or that He was thereby made more merciful and more forgiving than He was before. Such a supposition indeed contradicts alike the fundamental idea of God as impassible, as one 'with whom is no variableness, 'neither shadow of turning;' and it contradicts also, as we have seen, that 'express image' of God which we possess in the Son of Man. What on the other hand Christ does assert in our text, and what has been and may still be abundantly verified by Christian experience, is this:—that without His Death and Passion the message of Repentance and Remission

would never have been effectively preached, never have reached the hearts of men and been accepted there. Thus although it has proved to be a necessary condition for us without which the forgiveness of our sins would never have been realized, yet it is not therefore a reason *ex parti Dei* why He forgives the sinner. It moves and encourages the prodigal to turn his steps homeward to the Father's house, but it is not the reason why when he is yet a great way off, that Father goes to meet him. In a word, the Saviour's Death and that alone enables us by repentance and faith to receive forgiveness, but it is not necessary to God in order that He may be willing to forgive.

There is, however, a well-recognized infirmity of the human mind, by reason of which we are continually tending to project and imagine as outward the changes and perceptions which we experience within. From this cause it has come about that believers have represented, and in the language of popular religion will probably always continue to represent, the changes wrought by Christ in their own attitude and relation to God as changes in the disposition of God Himself. The power of Christ's death upon the Cross has converted or turned round our souls towards God, and we picture God as turning towards us; we feel for the first time the Father's love, and we imagine that He has never loved us before; in the contemplation of Christ's Passion, notably perhaps at the Lord's Supper, we are conscious of His dying Love as drawing us to God, and we project this into a picture of Christ making intercession for us and pleading His sacrifice before the Father. Our conviction grows ever stronger that in the revelation of God and man which met in Jesus of Nazareth lies the World-Idea, which must prevail in determining the destiny of our race; and once more in the language and imagery of prophecy we say that the Son of Man is sitting on the right

hand of power, from henceforth waiting until His foes be made His footstool.

Such representations or projections, although often incongruous in themselves and with each other, are not to be hastily condemned as false: indeed for practical purposes, and for that vast majority of mankind who only think in images, they are both necessary and true. It is not until such 'idols of the Tribe' are exalted into the principles of a pretended Science, that they call for correction and explanation.

In conclusion, and in order to bring home to ourselves the fitness and efficacy of the Saviour's Passion, let us for a moment endeavour to imagine what would have been the result, if, instead of dying as He did, His earthly life and influence had been indefinitely extended. We can imagine the number and enlightenment of His disciples increased by living contact with Him; we may even sometimes have wished that He had lived to make clearer and more complete some parts of His teaching,—that He had not left the world until He had given it a complete Revelation of Truth. But then would Repentance and Remission of Sins have ever been preached so as to prevail? Would the wisest teaching, the purest and noblest life ever have bowed in adoration the knees of men, or saved a sinful world from perishing of moral corruption? And if not,—if no mere teaching, if no manifestation of Wisdom and power alone could have prevailed to change the hearts of men or raise them from dead works to serve the living God, may we not with all sincerity and devotion say 'Amen' to these words of our Saviour, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in His Name?'—Yea, Lord! it was meet for Thee,

in bringing forgiveness to all, to endure the last extremity of suffering and injustice Thyself, that we might know how much Thou canst forgive ! It was meet for Thee to be numbered with the Transgressors, and to be assailed with bitterest enmity and scorn, that the triumphant power of Thy Love might be manifest to all ! It was meet that Thou shouldst be raised on high upon the Cross of Shame, because from it and only from it couldst Thou draw all men unto Thee ! Therefore have all faithful hearts found there, and nowhere else, the assurance of forgiveness and of Peace with God. Without Thee we dare not look up, without Thee the horror of great darkness closes round and shuts us out from God ; but in Thee we find a fresh and living way opened to us. In Thee, as from beneath the covering of the old Mercy Seat, we can once more gaze upward to the Father's face, and learn there, no longer as a barren figment of theology, but as a reality living and present to the Soul, that Jesus Christ the Righteous is the Propitiation for our Sins.





3

1. *Children of the Free :*

(A PLEA FOR RATIONAL RELIGION).

2. *The Knowledge of Jesus only :*

(CONSIDERED AS A FIRST PRINCIPLE OF
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE).

TWO SERMONS

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

VICAR OF ST. GILES', AND FELLOW AND LATE TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S
COLLEGE, OXFORD; SELECT PREACHER, 1890-92.

James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD STREET, OXFORD ;

AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1893.

~~~~~  
*Price One Shilling.*

## NOTE.

---

[T seems right, though perhaps scarcely necessary, to say that the first of these Sermons is very largely inspired by Dr. Martineau's writings. It has long been a mystery to me what can keep that most Christian of teachers from the frank admission of Christ's Divinity<sup>a</sup>; and I for one am not ashamed to say that I have found more help and teaching from him than from any other living writer.

<sup>a</sup> See conclusion of Sermon I. as to alleged imperfections in Christ, and page 17 (note) as to the miraculous Birth.



## Children of the Free.

---

GAL. iv. 31.

*'So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.'*

A TRUE and precious conclusion indeed, and one to which the Apostle bore faithful witness, both in his life and writings! And yet when we come to examine the argument by which it is here ostensibly reached, we can scarcely regard it otherwise than as weak and arbitrary. It does not exhibit the true ground and nature of spiritual freedom at all. At best it can only be justified as an *argumentum ad hominem*; and so it opens half in pity, half in scorn: 'Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?' For S. Paul, as he says elsewhere of himself, was 'ready to be made all things to all men, if by all means he might save some:—to the Gentiles he became as without the law, appealing only to those religious instincts which are common to all men, and to the moral attraction of Christ Crucified; to the Jews he was equally ready to be as a Jew, and to exhibit the Gospel of Jesus as the true fulfilment both of law and prophecy; and here for these foolish would-be Jews of Galatia he condescends to employ a foolish and fanciful interpretation of Old Testament history as the most impressive form he could devise for setting before them those privileges which they were so ready to forego. He rehearses the old tale of Abraham and his two sons; he reminds them how the

true Israel was descended from the child of promise, whilst the descendants of Hagar's son were excluded from the title and inheritance of God's people. Then he proceeds to argue: this Hagar, in your mystical school of interpretation, stands for Mount Sinai, the seat and symbol of the Law, whereas Sarah and her son Isaac represent the rich and far-reaching promises of God. And this allegory, he concludes, is thus fulfilled: those that adhere to the Law of Sinai and fix their hopes upon an earthly Jerusalem are the children of bondage, whereas we who will have nothing to do with Sinai or Hagar, but trust to the promises of God instead of to the works of the flesh—we correspond to Isaac, the child of promise, and are the true 'children of the free.'

It is right, I think, to recall this argument, although to us it is little or no argument at all, because it affords an illustration of what we shall presently have to insist upon as a consequence and duty of Gospel freedom;—I mean the necessity, when we are dealing either with Holy Scripture or with any other religious creation, of distinguishing the essential from the irrelevant, the gems of Divine revelation from the temporary setting or literary form in which they first appeared.

(i) Before, however, we attempt to deal with any practical application of our freedom, we must endeavour first to recall its real and only adequate ground. This, as our Apostle teaches us in more than one Epistle, is only to be found in the full and living conviction of our Divine sonship. Before this conviction arose, or (as we ought, perhaps, rather to say) before the truth of it was revealed in the human consciousness, God was 'a God that hideth Himself' alike from Gentile and from Jew. His Self-revelation, His Will, His Commandments were for the most part unaccountable; they were like the instructions given by a wise employer to a gang of slaves for working a machine, or carrying out operations which they

were incapable of comprehending themselves. But the spirit of sonship, which we owe to Jesus, and to Him alone, assures us that we are not of another race and lineage ; it tells us that we have affinity with God, and that in virtue of such an affinity we may know Him, may even ‘stand and reason together’ with Him. Henceforth we know that the human spirit and human reason are not specifically different or incommensurable with the Divine ; but that it came forth and still comes from Him, that its end and perfection lie in Him, and that the recognition of this ultimate identity is the very Presence of God in the individual soul. Before this revelation, before God spoke to us by His Son, there was necessarily a casual—an uncertain and irrational element both in religious doctrine and religious practice. Religious Truth was not only Revealed, for that, in one sense or another, all Religion is and ever must be ; but it was Visionary or Apocalyptic. Truth was veiled and coloured by all manner of irrelevant imagery, in which the Voice of God, speaking to the conscience of chosen men, or in the judgments of History, was represented by all the celestial machinery of Angels and Demons, Trumpets and Vials, or again by the intricate details of the Ceremonial Law. But, as S. Paul argues both in this Epistle and to the Corinthians, that veil is done away in Jesus Christ. He Himself spoke with no veil of mystery, but soul to soul ; and His Spirit still prompts and encourages us to hear God, and to commune with God as sons with a Father. Wherever therefore this Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty ; there is freedom to enter the Holy of Holies ; there the veil is taken away, and men begin, however timidly and painfully, to behold with open face the glory of God. Here, then, we have the true ground of Spiritual Freedom, and hence also flows its true description. Henceforth we are neither asked to receive any Truth which is not

rational and intelligible to the Christian Conscience, nor to perform as a religious duty any act which Reason and Conscience cannot understand and justify ; nor, if we would know the true from the false, the right from the wrong, must we look in the last resort to any external standard of orthodoxy—either to infallible Pope, or infallible Church, or infallible Book. In saying this we would not be understood as wanting in reverence for that unique collection of religious writings which we call the Bible ; but just because it is the *written* Word and not the living Voice, it needs an interpreter, and that interpreter can only be our Reason and Conscience, unless you fly to some Sovereign Pontiff or Conscience-keeper. For there must ever be that difficulty to deal with, which Plato long ago so graphically describes as inherent in all written language : ‘ it is dumb to the questions ‘ you ask, and if tossed about in mistake or contumely, it ‘ cannot defend itself, but needs its father to help it.’ But in the case of Holy Scripture we say that we are its rightful interpreters and defenders, because we are spiritually the children of the Father who inspired it. In the words of S. Paul, ‘ we have all drunk of that Spirit,’ and in virtue of that Spirit we are free to ‘ search all things, even the deep ‘ things of God,’ which are to be found there. In a recent book of essays we rejoice to find it admitted<sup>a</sup> that ‘ the ‘ Religious idea of God must be able to justify itself both to ‘ our moral and to our rational nature, on pain of ceasing to ‘ exist ;’ from which it follows that God’s Word can only speak to us as His Word, and with the authority of His Word, in so far as it can interpret itself to our Reason and justify itself to our Conscience. We cannot say ‘ this doctrine is ‘ divine, because it is found in a Canonical book, and that is

<sup>a</sup> Aubrey Moore in *Lux Mundi*.

## *A plea for Rational Religion.*

‘ human because it only occurs in the Apocrypha. We cannot say that one observance is binding because it is primitive, whilst another is objectionable because it belongs to the XIXth. century.’ ‘ Neither Church nor Scripture can serve on these easy terms as our Rule of Faith or practice,’ though both, if rightly used, may be the best of guides to the highest Truth and Goodness. ‘ To reach it, however,’ it has been finely said, ‘ without use of the discriminative faculties, to be carried blindfold into the Eternal Light, is impossible ; we have not simply to take, but always to choose, and the tests by which we distinguish the fictitious from the real, the wrong from the right, the unlovely from the beautiful, the profane from the sacred, are to be found *within* and not without,—in the methods of just thought, the instincts of pure Conscience, and the aspirations of unclouded Reason <sup>b</sup>.’

At the same time, it may perhaps be necessary to remark, these claims of Freedom and Sonship are diametrically opposed to what some have erroneously claimed as the Right of Private Judgment. There is indeed a certain sense in which Private Judgment is not only a right but a necessity, viz., that sense in which our Apostle said, ‘ Let every man be persuaded in his own mind.’ By this we mean that we cannot be convinced by proxy, that we cannot put another man’s conscience in place of our own, or understand in virtue of another man’s understanding. But when the ‘ right of Private Judgment ’ is put forward as the assertion of ‘ bare Individualism,’—that every man is to be his own measure of Truth and Righteousness,—it is equivalent to the renunciation of that supreme Authority in Reason and Conscience which we have seen to be the very essence of

<sup>b</sup> Martineau, ‘ Seat of Authority,’ p. 296.

Spiritual Freedom. For Reason is nothing private or individual, but the Common Light of God and Man: though broken up and diversely reflected in the myriad sparklets of individual souls, its unity, nevertheless, is ever asserting itself. As often as one man appeals to another, as often as he reasons of Truth and Righteousness, he proceeds upon the supposition of a common tribunal, before which he is prepared to justify himself and his doctrine by giving a 'reason for the faith that is in him,' not the 'ipse dixi' of his own opinions any more than the 'ipse dixit' of Pope or Council. Chillingworth puts this plainly enough when arguing with the sectaries of his day: 'Is there not a manifest difference,' he asks, 'between saying, "The Spirit of God tells me that this is the meaning of such a text (which no man can possibly know, it being a secret thing)," and between saying, "These and those *reasons* I have to show that this or that is true doctrine, or that this or that is the meaning of such a Scripture, *reason being a public and certain thing, and exposed to all men's trial and examination*?"'

(ii) By way of practically illustrating what has been said, let us next turn to see what our attitude will be as 'children of the Free' towards those questions concerning Holy Scripture which have caused perplexity to some at the present time. Here one of the first effects of freedom ought surely to be a deeper sense of responsibility and reverence towards everything that claims to be the revelation of the Father's mind and will. Just because we believe that He has spoken to the hearts and souls of men as He speaks to our own, therefore we must treat with the utmost respect not only those Books which, by what has happily been called a process of supernatural selection, have become pre-eminently marked out as inspired by His Spirit, but also those traditions and customs

° Chillingworth: "The Bible the Religion of Protestants," I., 336.

which have established themselves among good men. In neither case, however, can the Spirit of the Lord deny itself, but will demand alike of Scripture and Church tradition that it shall speak intelligibly, and approve itself to its spiritual kindred from age to age.

The answer, however, is sometimes slow in coming and hard to interpret; and hence it is that when the Light first shines into the strongholds of bigotry and bondage, the struggling children of freedom often find themselves in a 'strait betwixt two.' They have still to learn how to translate the old into the new, how to distinguish what is Divine and Spiritual and therefore congenial to God's children of all ages from what is accidental and temporary; and until this is done they will be in perplexity. Most serious, most trying of all it is when the perplexity centres round any words or acts which have been usually accredited to the Son of God Himself. Of this we have lately seen a striking example from a most unexpected quarter; and a very important and pressing question it is, where and in what direction to look for escape from such perplexities? It will not, I believe, be found in critical researches: these may possibly remove some old difficulties, but they will also suggest materials for new ones; and in any case they will not help us to find a general and permanent ground for dealing with the whole question. Much less can the children of the free ever regard the shelter of tradition and authority as supplying anything but a temporary and provisional refuge—a refuge for those alone who have neither the call nor the ability to address themselves to the difficulties of modern enquiry.

The one path of safety, as it seems to us, is suggested by certain words of our Master Himself. Among the first followers of Jesus must have been many who felt perplexities parallel to those which we are considering—perplexities be-

tween what they had hitherto received as the authoritative interpretation of the Law, and the new lessons in mercy and judgment which they were learning. And surely the counsel which was given to them may well be applied to ourselves at the present, and indeed to believers of all times :—‘ Continue ye in My word, and ye shall know the Truth ; and the Truth shall set you free.’

Here is unfolded the only path which combines safety with progress in religion.

(1) *It proceeds from words to Truth, from hearing to knowing, from the external acceptance to the inward conviction of Truth.* There are and always have been unprogressive Christians, who have ceased to learn, ceased to think it possible that there can be anything new to be learned, and who look askance at every fresh light which is thrown upon tradition ; and the penalty of this stagnant state of mind is to be either slaves of the letter or the prey of superficial difficulties and contradictions. On the other hand the reward of patient discipleship is to penetrate from the Word to Him who spoke it, from the letter to the Spirit which inspires it, to emerge from the acquaintance of isolated results and sayings into the light of Truth itself. (2) In the next place it is to be observed that *this Truth of which our Saviour speaks is not a true theory or system, but Himself, His own person and character.* The elaboration of theological dogmas and subtle distinctions concerning the limits of the human and divine in His Nature will not set us free either from our sins or our perplexities ; the promulgation of new theories concerning the Incarnation will not help us to know the Christ or His words. Moreover all such speculations are necessarily delusive : they proceed upon false assumptions, and they pursue impossible methods. For if we believe that in the person of Jesus, God and Man are One ;—then it follows both that in Him, and Him alone, have



we any knowledge of God's nature, and only in Him, i.e. in hypostatic union with Deity, can we know the full perfection of Humanity. We can neither observe the two substances (if we may for a moment employ that objectionable term) in all their perfection elsewhere, nor do we possess any intellectual re-agent by which we might analyze the mystery of Christ's Person, and separate the human element from the Divine in His life and words. And therefore we say that those who attempt such discussions are only deluding themselves, and reading their own fancies into the counsels of God. On the other hand, the knowledge of Himself which Jesus holds out to His disciples is neither to be found in theological dogmas nor in historical researches, though both of these of course have their proper occasion and place. It consists in the loving appreciation and loyal acceptance of His life as the fulness of ours; in the living contact of soul with soul, and that prostration of the heart before the perfect image of all it longs for, which still finds utterance in the confession, 'My Lord and my God!' The written word and the teaching Church are (let us never forget) the material means by which, under God, we may be brought to such a knowledge and faith in Him,—but they are nothing more; and this once attained, we become, if not altogether independent of these helps and stepping-stones to Christ, yet in a position nevertheless to judge and discriminate concerning them:—'the heir,' as St. Paul says, 'so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from 'a servant, but is under tutors and governors;' but when we have once received the adoption of sons we are no more servants,—no more in bondage to external and material rudiments,—but are free to direct and use these as heirs of God and 'lords of all.'

As such, then, we may boldly take stock of our position in view of every trial and perplexity which can assail our faith.

At bottom, we say, the rock upon which we stand must ever be the Person and character of our Saviour Himself. Him we worship as our God, believing that in Him we see and know all we can know of God. We cannot admit any imperfection, any fallibility into a being we worship; we are even impatient sometimes (are we not?) at those realistic efforts of some modern divines to reproduce the human and accidental traits of His life; we do not want to know a Christ after the flesh. And, therefore, when it is suggested that acts or assertions ascribed to Him in the Gospels are to be put down to human ignorance or error—however skilfully this may be wrapt up in theological language, or explained by subtler theories of the Incarnation—we must at once take exception. We will have none of that. The Christ who is our God, the Christ who died and rose again, and is ascended far above all heavens, the Living Christ, who even now saves us, is as incapable of error as He is of moral blemish. But though we are prepared to stake our faith upon the Divinity of Jesus Christ and upon His infallibility, we are not therefore prepared to stake it either upon the infallibility of the record which has come down to us, or of the Church which has preserved it. We will not be betrayed by any arguments, however specious, into making our faith stand in the wisdom or writings of men, or in anything else, save the attraction which God revealed in Christ Jesus exerts over our own souls. . . . There, as we gaze and strive to focus the scattered and scanty rays of His life, the impression will ever grow clearer and clearer; the words and acts recorded of Him will fall by degrees into place; much that was obscure will become plain, though something no doubt may at first seem confused and refuse to blend into the picture. And for the rest;—if there should still remain here and there some detail which seems irreconcilable with our convic-

tions of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness; if we find arguments put into His lips which (as they read) sound irrelevant and sophistical, or acts ascribed to Him which seem inconsistent with His ministry and message of Mercy, we shall simply say 'there must be a mistake somewhere:—either we misunderstand the record, or the accretions of human invention have been fathered upon our Divine Master. But whatever betide, we will never do violence either to our own Reason and Conscience, nor yet to our faith in His Divine perfections.'

If only by patience and comfort of His Holy Word we shall have attained to a real and experimental knowledge of our Saviour, if only the Father of Spirits shall have revealed to our spirit that He is indeed the Son of God and our elder brother, then, dear brethren, there is nothing in all the world—nothing in science, nothing in criticism—which can ever move us. In the immediate consciousness of our Sonship, in the sure knowledge that we are Christ's and that Christ is ours, we shall care but little either for the objections of unspiritual persons, or for the perplexities of those who are still but half emancipated, ever rejoicing in the assurance that 'we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.'

## The Knowledge of Jesus only.

---

I COR. ii. 2.

*‘For I determined not to know any thing among you, save  
• Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.’*

THIS determination of the Apostle has sometimes been employed to justify a more or less narrow and partial method of presenting the message of Salvation,—as if the moral teaching of Jesus, His ‘Gospel of the Kingdom,’ and the various incidents of His life might be disregarded in favour of an exclusive insistence upon His death for sinners. If however we ponder again the Apostle’s words with minds fresh and free from such prepossessions, we shall find that he is contemplating no such invidious limitation of Christian doctrine, but that he is here maintaining a principle, and that an universal principle, of theological method, which he declares to be applicable to the whole range of religious questions both practical and speculative. We have only to turn to the immediate context in order to see that he is prepared to contemplate the whole mystery of Divine Wisdom, expressly claiming the power through the spirit of penetrating ‘even the deep things of God.’ We cannot then suppose him to mean that being possessed of such higher knowledge, he deliberately renounced it and limited himself to the preaching of the Cross; but rather, that rejecting all other methods and arguments, all appeals to philosophy and Scripture such as he had before and elsewhere employed, he now took his stand solely and wholly upon the truth of Christ’s Person and

Christ's Death. In other words, this was to be the first principle, the major premise of all his teaching. It was to be (i) his *starting point*, or *foundation* upon which he based his own teaching, and (ii) *the test and touchstone* to which he would bring all he had to say and all that could be said concerning the Divine Will and Counsels. We have, unfortunately, no report of S. Paul's preaching to the Gentiles at Corinth; and all his recorded discourses elsewhere being with one exception addressed to Jews and proselytes, he naturally argues in them from the basis of Messianic prophecies. Thus, although we find in the Epistles numberless examples of the way in which he appealed to this first principle of doctrine in dealing with questions which subsequently arose in the Churches, we cannot point to the way in which he actually employed it in his first and earliest preaching; and consequently we are in a great measure thrown back upon our own reflection and inferences in considering our first question, viz. how can the knowledge of Christ and Him Crucified be made available as the sole first principle and starting-point of Christian doctrine.

§ i. '*Jesus only*,' *the starting point of Christian doctrine.*

(1) To begin with, it needs but little reflection to see that if this knowledge of Jesus Christ is to be fruitful and progressive, if it is to lead us onward and light our way into further truth, we must first be able from that knowledge to infer and to believe in His Divinity. On ascertaining the facts of His life,—the words He spoke, the actions He performed, the death He died, the life to which He rose again,—we must be able to make the assertion 'this is the 'Son of God,' 'nothing can be conceived more divine than 'the character He revealed,' 'in Him dwelleth all the fulness 'of the Godhead bodily.' This, you will remember, is what Christ claimed for Himself when He said, 'No man hath seen

' God at any time ; the only-begotten Son He hath revealed ' Him ;' and if we have once taken this step, once been really convinced that Jesus is God, we are clearly in a position to speak and to judge with some certainty and some authority as to God's Will and character, and of His dealings with mankind.

(2) But then in order to take this step, in order to say ' Jesus is the Son of God,' we must first possess within ourselves,—in our minds and consciences,—some previous conception, however vague and tentative, of what God must be. Trace it back to its first beginnings and you will find that you must postulate a Divine capacity in man, the same ' blind ' longing after the good and true<sup>d</sup> ' which forms the basis or raw material of our moral nature. Ask how such a capacity has been developed and enlightened so that it could recognize the ' Son of God,' when presented to it? and we can only answer with Scripture and philosophy that such development and enlightenment must have been due to the agency of God Himself, speaking through ages past ' in sundry times and divers manners,' the One and only Source of Light which enlightened all generations of mankind ; when therefore that Light itself came into the world, no longer working within the conscience, but revealed under outward conditions, it was recognizable on the principle of affinity. S. Paul shows this when in one Epistle he expressly declares, ' No man can say that Jesus is the Lord except by the Holy Ghost,' or when he argues as he does in the very chapter before us, ' What man knoweth the ' things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? ' even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of ' God.' How this capacity to receive the things of God, how this ideal of a Divine impersonation of Goodness and Wisdom has been gradually built up, how from the first slavish worship

<sup>d</sup> Aristotle, *Magn. Mor. I.*, 1197 b.

of Nature men gradually learn to conceive of God as Spirit—all these preparatory stages in the education of our race lie within the province of religious anthropology. From the pulpit we must commence nearer home. As cultured Europeans of to-day, we can no more divest ourselves of the conception of God than we can divest ourselves of Language or the Forms of thought. As Wisdom and Order, as Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, it hovers before our spiritual vision; we look for its manifestation in the world of Nature; we demand its expression in the world of Spirit. Neither again is it possible to be possessed by such an idea, without at the same time being possessed of some desire, which may become the conscious will and purpose, to draw near to that Being, to see Him and to know Him more fully. This is still a stage, although perhaps the highest stage, of Natural Religion, the stage which St. Paul observed and described in his speech on Mars' Hill, when he appealed to the consciousness of an Unknown God, and the blind desire 'to seek Him if haply 'they might feel after Him and find Him.'

(3) Now in view of this partially enlightened but still unsatisfied conscience of Natural Religion, several methods might occur to a Christian preacher like S. Paul, as they might also occur to a missionary of the present day. He might have appealed, as he had so often done before a Jewish audience, to God's dealings with His chosen people, to the visions and hopes of prophet or Psalmist, and their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth: he might, if he had ever heard of them, have narrated those miraculous appearances and angelic announcements which are found in two of our gospels<sup>e</sup>: or again, he might have endeavoured, from some

<sup>e</sup> Belief in the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ has no necessary connection with the miraculous story of His birth, though Unitarians and possibly some orthodox are apt to regard them as inseparable. Surely,

definition of God assumed or admitted, coupled with the reported miracles of Jesus, to prove His Divinity by hard logic, which was more or less the method so carefully elaborated, and even reduced to a mechanical process by the scholastic missionary Raymund Lully for the benefit of the Moors. None of these methods however commended themselves to our Apostle: perhaps previous experience had convinced him of their futility: at any rate he put them all aside, determined to know one thing only, 'Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.' In other words he acted in accordance with the Saviour's own prophetic words: 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' He relied exclusively upon the moral attraction to be produced by the Life and Cross of Jesus Christ, and to the answering witness within the hearts of his hearers. Jesus once accepted as their Lord and God, He felt that He had a starting-point adequate alike for their instruction in all mysteries, and for their progress in the path of holiness.

Here let us pause to remark that it is of no use pretending that the truth of the Gospel is demonstrable by logic, or that it can be made apparent to the natural understanding. The demonstration, as S. Paul here asserts, is in the Spirit and its power to enlighten and to raise the life of man; the appeal, when closely examined, will be found always to have been directed to our spiritual capacity to recognize and receive the Divine when presented to us. It is as if a naturalist had set out to explore some new country in search

however, it should be enough to point out that neither St. Peter, as represented by his speeches in the Acts or by his Epistle, nor St. Paul, nor yet St. John, ever appeal to the Gospel of the Infancy, or even seem to have heard of it. We have then no right to demand either of Unitarians or any one else that they should be more orthodox than these three Apostles, or, let us say, than Clement of Alexandria.



of some rare or forgotten species of plant or animal:—all he has to guide him is its general description and the enthusiastic desire to find it; and when at last he lights upon it, he cries, ‘this must be it;’ it answers the description, though not altogether, perhaps, as he had pictured it to himself beforehand; it fulfils yet surpasses all his expectations. In the same way those who are really and sincerely feeling after God and the truth of human life, find in Jesus Christ a revelation which sets all their questionings at rest. And if this is indeed the case, if, i.e., we are convinced that He is the Only-begotten and the express image of the Father, what right or reason have we to go behind that conviction? why, instead of seeing in Him a substantive and independent revelation of God, should theologians fall back upon their own assumptions? why should they try to fit and square the person and work of Jesus into their narrow prepossessions? why not say at once that His revelation goes beyond human conceptions of justice and goodness and affords a fresh *datum* or starting-point superseding all other authorities and traditions?

§ ii. ‘*Jesus only*’ applied as a principle to theological questions.

At this point then of our argument we shall proceed to consider how the knowledge of Jesus only, resulting in the conviction of His Divine Sonship, may become a source of further knowledge and supply the solution of those theological problems which Christianity has from time to time encountered.

(1) Let us endeavour to see how it bears upon a group of questions which more than any others, perhaps, have exercised subtle intellects and given rise to doubtful disputations and doctrines past number:—why did God ever appear upon the theatre of human history? what causes can be assigned

for the Incarnation and atoning Death of Christ? To furnish an account of such matters upon *à priori* grounds, all manner of theories and assumptions have been made,—theories as to the Eternal Counsels of God, theories as to the limitations of His power occasioned by the Creation and Fall of Man, assumptions concerning the Almighty and His requirements, assumptions concerning the Devil and his claims. Some of these are but thinly-veiled fables and mythological representations; others are derived from false or arbitrary interpretations of Scripture; but one and all of them, their whole fabric and network, melt away when brought to that simple touchstone which the Apostle here commends to us. If we know Jesus Christ so as to find in Him the revelation of the Father's will and the express image of Deity, we are furnished in Him, without looking further, with a complete and adequate answer to all such questions; although it is not an answer, perhaps, which will satisfy the sophistical proclivities of the human intellect. The Cross testifies to the unconquerable love of God, the risen Christ proclaims His power to do according to His love. All the artificial accounts which have been put forward to explain the need and efficacy of the Atonement simply appear as irrelevant, not to say ridiculous, when viewed in the light of God's will and character revealed in Christ, and in the light of those express declarations which the Christ made concerning the object of His own mission to the world.

(2) Turning in the next place to those questions which have been raised at different times, and now lately revived, relating to our Lord's person and the limitations attached to His power and knowledge, we have to observe generally that they all originate not in the life and character of Jesus Himself, but in the prepossessions with which these are studied. We meet with difficulties because we start entangled

with our own false presumptions:—perhaps it is some hastily formed idea of God whom we picture as following with humanlike interest and observation the transitory accidents of human history; or without waiting to enquire what Jesus meant by calling Himself the Son of God, we thoughtlessly represent His origin and person after the fashion of the old heathen mythologies; and then just as a botanist or zoologist might discourse on some rare product of hybridization, pointing out how the racial peculiarities of the parents have been obliterated or preserved, so men have not hesitated to analyze the divine and human elements in the person of Jesus, and to define the limits of His powers. On some future occasion we may discuss that important text in Philippians (ii. 6) and point out how grievously it has been twisted and misused to justify those theories as to the conditions of Christ's person and existence; here we shall only submit a single consideration as to those results of modern criticism which are supposed to necessitate them. Absolutely then, we do not hesitate to assert, the subjects broached by modern criticism can have nothing whatever to do with Christ's Divine Nature: they belong wholly to the sphere of the temporal, the outward, the accidental, which simply does not exist in relation to God, and which therefore it would be absurd to expect the Christ to recognize. An illustration perhaps will make this point more clear: you know that mathematicians attend only to the eternal or essential properties of number and magnitude; and if any one were foolish enough to ask them questions concerning such accidental facts as the date when a particular theorem was discovered or the name of the discoverer,—who first proved the properties of the triangle or extracted the first square root? they would (if they condescended to notice such follies at all) answer at once that Science took no notice of times and seasons, and was

not careful to distinguish the merits of individual discoverers. Now it seems equally absurd and irrelevant to suppose that the Son of God would interest Himself in questions of date and authorship or anticipate the theories of modern criticism. The date and authorship of a Sacred Book, the changes and additions introduced by subsequent editors—these and the like subjects may well enough interest the earthly intellect and exercise human ingenuity ; but they all belong to the fleshly and transitory, the temporal and accidental environment which relatively to Absolute Truth is non-existent. To them as to so many topics which have agitated the Church, Christ's universal axiom applies : ' It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.' ' Now the spirit,' as we know, ' of all prophecy is the testimony of Jesus,' and wherever we find that, we find Spirit and Life ; but whose were the human lips which first gave it utterance, who caught it up, who passed it on from age to age?—such questions, however they may interest the historian, do not affect the truth and essence of that Revelation, which Jesus Christ came to fulfil, and which is all that concerns us as believers in Him.

(3) So far we have endeavoured to show, that if we will only discard the high-sounding but empty pretensions of theology, and determine instead to know Jesus only, to make Him our Wisdom, and His revelation of what is Divine, the first principle and touchstone of our beliefs,—we shall be in a position either to answer in a satisfactory manner, or else to put aside as irrelevant those doctrinal questions which have acquired so exaggerated an importance. But we must not conclude without also indicating, however briefly, the efficacy of the same principle in matters of personal religion and public worship. If our conviction of Christ's true God-head, of the love which He testified by His Cross, and of

His consequent claims upon our allegiance be sincere, it ought to dominate all our acts of devotion, and should also be the ultimate authority and court of appeal in all question of religious rites and practice. In private reading or public instruction our aim should be at a closer study and more living acquaintance with Christ Himself; in religious exercises we should endeavour to quicken our own love and loyalty towards Him by dwelling upon His love towards us. When such exercises are a part of public worship, or 'common prayer,' the question of ecclesiastical laws and customs comes in. These vary from age to age; they are a matter of national history and character, or even of such physical conditions as climate and the like. Whilst respecting them therefore, as we respect the usages and conventions of the Society in which we live, we shall at the same time take care not to let them usurp any higher place or authority. In view of the importance which many attach to the hour and physical condition in which we approach the Lord's Table, to the observance of fast and festival, to the appointment or apparelling of the clergy,—in all such matters we shall refrain as far as may be from wounding the susceptibilities of the weaker brethren; but at the same time, when the weaker brethren wax wanton and show signs of playing the tyrant, when they take upon themselves to 'teach as necessary doctrines the commandments of men,' it is time to protest; and the most effective method of protesting is not by joining direct issue on their own narrow and artificial platform, but by dragging forth the whole question into the light of first principles.

The appeal to ecclesiastical authority, or even to the example of the primitive Church, is ambiguous and misleading. The Church writers of the first centuries supply us with evidence of unique value concerning the reception and the text of the

various Books of the New Testament, and in tracing the development of Christian life and doctrine every saying and incident recorded is of the highest interest. But for all that we must not confound the '*quæstio facti*' with the '*quæstio juris*,' or suppose that every doctrine held in the first three centuries was true, or that every practice was of divine authority. We know from the Apostolic writings how soon attempts were made to overlay the faith and practice of the Gospel with elements both rabbinical and ascetic; how readily those who had 'begun in the spirit' endeavoured to seek perfection in carnal ordinances. And if it was all S. Paul could do to combat such tendencies during his lifetime, can we be surprised to find them widely prevalent in the next generation? or that they have continuously asserted themselves ever since?

When, therefore, we hear the Church and Ecclesiastical traditions, or even the early Fathers appealed to, as if the teaching or devotional usages which commended themselves in the past have any extrinsic authority beyond what Reason may adjudge them on their own merits,—when we hear Christian men gravely advocating the revival of Canon Law for deciding questions of Religious discipline and worship, we who really believe in our Saviour as Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, will not be misled or entrapped into any such labyrinth of legalities; we shall determine to know one thing only, Jesus and Him crucified.

4.  
*The Divine Mind Revealed in  
Christ Jesus,*

(WITH A NOTE ON PHIL. ii. 6).

---

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

THE CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE (AND,  
IN SUBSTANCE, AT ST. GILES' CHURCH).

BY

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

FELLOW AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE;  
VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD.

---

James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD STREET, OXFORD;  
AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1893.

“MERKE, wie Christus in diesem spruche (John xvii. 3) sein und des Vaters Erkenntniss in einander flicht und bindet, also dass man allein durch und in Christo den Vater erkennt. Denn das habe ich oft gesagt und sage es noch immer, dass man auch, wenn ich nun todt bin, daran gedenke und sich hüte vor allen Lehrern, als die der Teufel reitet und führet, die oben am höchsten anfangen zu lehren und predigen von Gott, blos und abgesondert von Christo, wie man bisher in hohen Schulen speculirt und gespielet hat mit seinen Werken oben in Himmel, was er sei, denke und thue bei sich selbst.”—*Luther.*

“Mens humana speculationibus non assequitur naturam Dei, neque certo potest statuere misericordiam Dei erga nos; sed quando in Christo apprehenditur misericordia Dei, tunc incipit cernere bonitatem et præsentiam Dei, et Deum aliquo modo intelligere. . . .

“Hæc methodus non progreditur à priori, hoc est ab arcana natura Dei ad cognitionem voluntatis Dei, sed a cognitione Christi et misericordiæ revelatæ ad cognitionem Dei. In hac cognitione exercere et confirmare animos longe melius est quam philosophari de arcana natura Dei.”—*Melanchthon.*



# The Divine Mind Revealed in Christ Jesus.

---

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

*'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'*

THE subject upon which I propose to speak to you this morning is the most profound that can occupy the human mind. It is nothing less than the Divine nature and character. But though it is profound, it is, or ought to be, one also of practical importance; for whatever our conception of God may be, it will, in so far as it becomes a real object of faith, influence our lives and conduct; it will be the ideal towards which we shall try to assimilate our own characters<sup>a</sup>. In some respects, it is true, the conception of God is beyond our capacity,—we cannot know Him as He is. 'No man hath seen God at any time,' and all that has ever been thought or said of Him has been thought and said *secundum hominem*, after the measure and stature of a man. We have no choice in the matter: anthropomorphism, as it is called, is the necessary form of all religion, as it is of all our thoughts. At the same time, as Christians, we believe that the only-begotten Son of God has *declared* Him<sup>b</sup>, and revealed Him finally and completely so far as He can be revealed to man. The revelation indeed is still anthropomorphic,—otherwise it would not be intelligible; but the an-

<sup>a</sup> Matthew v. 48.

<sup>b</sup> John i. 18.

thropomorphism is absolute, because Jesus Christ was also 'the Son of Man,' i.e., the true and perfect development of humanity uncoloured by the idiosyncrasies, unstained by the sins which affect and have affected all other specimens of the race. And therefore God, as revealed in Him and through Him, is the *final* revelation of God, and Christianity the absolute or universal religion for all mankind.

Thus we are at once limited and directed in our enquiry after God. We look to see—not God as He is in Himself, but as He is revealed in the Son of Man, not 'as He is in 'Heaven,' but as He appeared under the conditions of human life and of human experience. And in this text from the Epistle to the Philippians, so strangely misused for purposes quite irrelevant to the Apostle's argument, I think we shall find that St. Paul brings to a focus, as it were, all the brightness of the divine glory which was revealed in Christ, and sums it up for us in a single phrase. In the first place then (1) we shall consider carefully the meaning of the Apostle's words; then (2) we shall test the truth of his statement (and incidentally also the correctness of our interpretation) by reference to the testimony of other Apostolic writers, and above all by reference to the teaching of Christ Himself; and (3) lastly we shall endeavour briefly to bring home this revelation of God to our consciences, and apply it to our lives.

(1) In order to elucidate our text, we must commence, of course, by noticing the general drift of the exhortation in which it occurs. St. Paul, you will find, is here urging his converts at Philippi to give up the spirit of competition and self-assertion; 'let nothing,' he says, 'be done through 'strife or vain glory;' and instead of a self-regarding morality, he inculcates a motive and line of conduct which may conveniently be expressed by a word of modern coinage as 'altruism,' i.e., the habit of putting others before our-

selves, or rather, perhaps, of finding our own good and happiness in that of others:—‘look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.’ This duty he then proceeds to enforce by the example of Christ, intimating at the same time that His example was authoritative, because, as true Son of God, He could decide, as none other could decide, what was in keeping with the Divine character. Now when a writer has a certain definite antithesis in his mind, we reasonably expect to find the same antithesis either expressed or implied if, as here, he appeals to example: Christ, it is only natural that he should go on to say, rejected that spirit of self-assertion which would seize every advantage for itself, whilst He exemplified that other, the altruistic spirit, ever ready to give up and deny self for the sake of others. And in accordance with this, the natural sequence of thought, it is quite possible, and indeed the most obvious way, to interpret the words which follow: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting, as He did, in the form of God’ (and therefore a certain index of what was truly Divine) ‘deemed that the part of full and equal Deity was not the seizing of aught for self, but the emptying of self—not self-aggrandisement, but self-surrender.’ Instead, however, of thus balancing one abstract term against another (*κένωσις* against *ἀπαγγὸς*) the Apostle breaks forth into a concrete description of the self-emptying process as exemplified by our Lord, and therewith is carried on to speak also of that glory to which it was the entrance <sup>e</sup>, the glory of reigning supreme in the adoration of every intelligent and moral being:—‘He gave His very self away, taking the form of a slave, and humbling Himself even to the slave’s death of shame; wherefore hath God also highly exalted Him,’ &c. . . . It is no question, you see, of

<sup>e</sup> Cf. Luke xxiv. 26.

some divine and glorious attributes which for a time He was content to lay aside ; but, in the words of the great evangelical prophet, of pouring out His very soul unto death, and therein manifesting His essential Deity, to which Death could only be the entrance to a higher and fuller life.

An entirely different turn, however, has been given to S. Paul's words, which, if it could be maintained, would from our point of view cut from under us all certainty of knowledge concerning God. The Apostle is represented as here asserting that Jesus Christ instead of being the complete revelation of God in His earthly life, emptied Himself in part at least of *His Divine attributes* ; it is implied, in the teeth of what is so explicitly stated in the companion Epistle to Colossæ, that in Christ Jesus all the fulness of the Godhead did not dwell in bodily form ; and therefore if this were so, we should once more be without any absolute revelation of God,—we should still require some further criterion by which to distinguish when Christ was speaking or acting as God, and when His words or actions are to be ascribed to His abnegation of Deity,—to the necessities and even (as it is contended) to the ignorance of His human nature. The most violent special pleading, however, is necessary in order to extract this theory of the *κένωσις*, as it is termed, out of the Apostle's words ; and those at any rate who look to Jesus as the only and all-sufficing source both of faith and doctrine will be slow to accept any but the natural and straightforward interpretation of our text<sup>d</sup>, according to which we are taught—not that the Son of God forfeited His Godhead in any degree either by his Incarnation or sufferings, but that every act of self-sacrifice was done in virtue of His Divine Nature. And thereby we are led to infer that the very essence or energy of God (so far as we can apprehend it) just consists in pouring Himself forth, in giving Himself away for His creatures.

<sup>d</sup> See Note appended to this Sermon.

(2) This interpretation of our text and this Conception of the Divine Nature receives additional verification, when we consider, as we must now proceed to do, how far it is borne out by the testimony of other Apostolic writers, and, above all, by the teaching of our Lord Himself. In the course of a short sermon, we cannot do more than refer to a few of the most salient and decisive passages which seem to bear upon the subject ; and here we shall begin by taking the very emphatic testimony of St. John. In his first Epistle, you will remember, he tells us that his one object in writing was to put on record his own impressions of the Divine character as revealed in the incarnate Word ; and in order to express the perfect but searching goodness of God, he begins by defining God as ‘ Light,’ and upon this aspect of the Divine Nature he bases the duty of inward honesty, and therefore also of a free and penitent confession of sin. Then as the thought of God’s infinite tenderness possesses him, and he enlarges in turn upon the corresponding obligation to cultivate a Divine charity among believers, he ventures upon yet another definition : ‘ God is Love.’ And this surely is only another way of expressing the same conviction as to the Divine Nature which we have already found in S. Paul. For the essential moment in love is the giving up of oneself to another ; just as it is love’s glory, love’s reward to find itself again in that other. To take the illustration which is at once the most familiar and the most appropriate to Him ‘ of whom every ‘ family in heaven and earth is named ;’—parental affection, in proportion as it fulfils its idea is manifested in self-devotion to its offspring ; parents as such are utterly regardless of self ; their only joy, their only glory is to find their love returned by their children.

Before proceeding to the teaching of Himself, there is one other specimen of Apostolic testimony which must be men-

tioned as going to prove that the self-surrender of the Son was a revelation of the Divine Nature, not an exceptional accident due to His earthly mission. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in urging the efficacy of Christ's death expressly states that He offered Himself through or in virtue of the eternal Spirit of God ; i.e., that though the Sacrifice of Christ was the one and only realization of the Divine power of Redemption upon earth, yet it was not an act exceptional or contrary to the Divine Nature, but was Its manifestation and effect ; it is not to be ascribed merely to the requirements of Christ's earthly life and mission ; it was not in consequence of His Incarnation, but in virtue of that Spirit which binds Father and Son in One from all eternity. Here, therefore, we see once more that the very essence of Deity is conceived of as the emptying or sacrifice of Self.

Similar inferences might no doubt be drawn from other writers, but we would rather hasten on to the very words of Christ Himself ; for here does not almost every page of the gospels testify to the same great truth ?

(a) First we have the direct and explicit utterances concerning Himself:—in none of these does He ever imply that His earthly life-work involved any limitation or interruption in His Divine Existence ; on the contrary, He spoke of Himself as still ' One with the Father,' as still ' in heaven ;' His Will was the Father's Will, His Work the Father's Work, His Love the Father's Love. Notice especially how in His great high-priestly prayer, He identifies the glory of Self-sacrifice, the glory of the Cross to which He was then looking forward, with the glory which He had in common with the Father ' before the world was <sup>e</sup>.'

(b) But almost more instructive are those principles of life and conduct which He enjoined upon His followers, and which are strictly pertinent to the question we are considering

<sup>e</sup> John xvii. 5 ; cf. Rev. v. 6.

because they are expressly based upon the obligation of becoming assimilated to the Divine character ;—‘that ye may ‘be the children of your Father which is in heaven,’ and again, ‘Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.’ As we ponder these sublime precepts which unfold the ‘Righteousness of God’, can we fail to perceive that its inmost core and description are just summed up in the formula which we have learnt from S. Paul, ‘not taking ‘but giving, not self-assertion but self-surrender.’ This explains why we are to love not our friends only but our enemies, why we should seek to do good to our persecutors, why we should repay good for evil, and turn the other cheek to the smiter. And yet again it explains why the only greatness which we are to pursue is the greatness which comes by service, ‘even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered ‘unto but to minister,’ and dwelt amongst men ‘as one that ‘serveth.’

(3) “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus!” It is of a truth an unearthly type of goodness which He revealed, and one which seems strangely out of place in a world where ceaseless competition prevails, and where the ‘will to live,’ to assert self, seems at once the law of production and also of continued existence. It runs counter to all our instincts of prudence, of self-interest, and even of what we call our self-respect: to hold our own, to exact our due, to stand up for our rights, to demand satisfaction when they are infringed, and let no insult pass unchallenged,—are not these maxims which are commended even in societies professedly Christian? And when we see them disregarded by any one, are we not ready to exclaim, ‘how mean-spirited! how foolish to make himself so cheap, ‘to give himself away.’ And yet ‘to give self away’ is, as we have seen, the very essence and actuality of God, as it

also is the underlying principle of those gospel precepts which we all profess to admire! So it is that when they contemplate the actual state of society and their own hearts, many have been tempted to ask whether the imitation of God can ever be realized in the world, whether the kingdom of Heaven must not be relegated to an undefined future in the land of impossible ideals, whilst for actual life the paradox must be whittled down, and the Commandments modified to suit the exigencies of existing circumstances. But, oh! brethren, whatever we are, whatever we do, let us not trifle or tamper with our one revelation of what is most divine. Rather let us recognize its unapproachable sublimity, and confess with one of old, 'Thy righteousness, 'O God, is like the great mountains!' Serene they stand in their infinite remoteness, never perhaps to be trodden by mortal feet! yet who would ask to see the mountains levelled with the plain, or traversed by the sordid thoroughfares of life? And better far for us that our ideal of the divine goodness should still be exalted before our gaze in all its unearthly purity,—to keep our hearts penitent and lowly, to keep us from ever growing satisfied with present attainment, to lure us, however slowly, at whatever distance, towards the prize of our high calling as the sons of God! Amen.



## NOTE.

---

THE interpretation we have given to our text differs in several respects from that which has of late years been most widely accepted<sup>a</sup>. (1) We take a different view of the general construction and run of the sentence, construing οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν . . . ἀλλὰ instead of οὐχ' ἡγήσατο . . . ἀλλὰ; (2) we refuse to read an 'although' into the participle ὑπάρχων which would further involve reading a 'nevertheless' into the principal verb ἡγήσατο; (3) we understand ἄρπαγμὸς according to its grammatical form, as expressing the active process of 'seizing the spoil;' (4) we do not understand the Aorist ἡγήσατο to indicate any particular point of time, much less a point of time in the eternal existence of the Son of God. On each of these points, therefore, we shall submit a few considerations.

1. The first point does not materially affect the meaning of the passage. As far as our exposition is concerned, it makes but little difference whether we translate 'deemed 'that to be God-equal consisted not in seizing the spoil, but '—He gave His very self away,' or, 'He did not judge that 'to be God-equal consisted in seizing the spoil, but gave His 'very self away.' The latter no doubt is the easier way of taking the passage, but it does not therefore follow that it corresponds with the flow of the Apostle's thoughts, for

<sup>a</sup> Meyer and Alford can be cited as partly favouring our translation as regards ἄρπαγμὸς. But they also limit ἡγήσατο to 'the point of time 'when Christ was about to come into the world,' and hardly give the fully active sense to ἄρπαγμὸς which we plead for, but interpret it as signifying as a *means* rather than *process* of self-enrichment.

which we must consult the preceding verses. After all, this must remain to a great extent a question 'of ear' and of St. Paul's style; it does not admit of being positively decided, nor does it affect the general exegesis of the passage, though if our construction is the correct one, it does bear upon the meaning of ἀρπαγμός (see below).

2. Our second point is more important. The conjunctions 'although,' 'nevertheless,' in many cases express faithfully enough the relation of verb and participle, and might do so here; but since, when once imported, they are apt to dominate and practically decide the interpretation we put upon any passage, it is not fair to begin by assuming them. Just as Bp. Lightfoot objects to the A.V. for understanding ὁμῶς after ἀλλὰ in verse 7, so we plead that it is no less a *petitio principii* to introduce it here. We should at any rate bear in mind that it is quite as frequent for the participle to contain the *cause* or *explanation* of the action signified in the principal verb, as it is for it to indicate an unexpected *combination*: in other words, it is grammatically quite as legitimate to construe the passage, 'who *because* He subsisted 'in the form of God,' as to construe it, 'who, *although* He 'subsisted in the form of God, *nevertheless* . . .'

3. As regards the meaning of ἀρπαγμός, it is admitted on all hands that by its form and gender it ought naturally and properly to signify an *act* or *process*, whereas to express the *object* or *result* of the same act we have the neuter form ἀρπαγμα. But all the same it has been contended that certain other formations in μός stand indifferently both for action and result, or even for the result alone, e.g. θεσμός, χρησμός, δεσμός, πλοχμός<sup>b</sup>; and that, on the strength of these analogies, we have here a right to understand ἀρπαγμός as =

<sup>b</sup> But not φραγμός, which, even in Anth. P. 9. 343 (quoted by Bp. Lightfoot from L. and S.), means 'fence' and not 'enclosure.'

ἄρπαγμα, although in the only other decisive passage in which the word occurs it retains its strict grammatical meaning<sup>c</sup>.

The force, however, of all the analogies which have been adduced is greatly diminished, if not destroyed, when we are careful to distinguish the two kinds of accusatives which are taken by different classes of verbs, and to which formatives in *-μός* and *-μα* correspond. (α) There is the 'internal' or 'cognate' accusative, e.g., *ἐχρησα χρησμόν*. (β) The 'external' accusative, as *ἀρπάζω βούν*. In the former class (α), the accusative expresses the result of the action embodied in a concrete thing, which except for the action and apart from the action would never have existed, and in some cases would not continue to exist at all. In such cases, therefore, the *action* and its *product* are not easily separable, and the distinction between the corresponding formatives in *-μός* and *-μα* tends to become obliterated, e.g., *Θεσμός, πλοχμός, δεσμός, χρησμός*. In the case, however, of external accusatives, an object is denoted which existed prior to and independently of the action of the verb, and which remains *intrinsically* the same thing after the action as

<sup>c</sup> In Plutarch's 'Moralia' both words occur; and he observes the proper grammatical distinction in their use. With regard to the patristic passages quoted by Lightfoot as favouring the ἄρπαγμα meaning, none are decisively in his favour; indeed they all are compatible with, even if they do not require, the active meaning. In that from a Catena on S. Mark x. 42, *τῷ δεῖξαι ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρπαγμός ἢ τιμῆ, τῶν ἐθνῶν γὰρ τὸ τοιοῦτον*, surely the meaning is, that office should not be, as it was among the Gentiles, a *career of rapacity*. In Cyril, *de Adoratione*, may not the words be translated, 'Lot did not regard the refusal of the Angels (to accept his hospitality) from the point of view of making gain,' or 'did not make the refusal of the angels a source of profit to himself?' In Eusebius, *Comm. in Luc.* vi., the word is at least equally ambiguous: of course it makes very good sense to say that 'Peter regarded his martyrdom as a prize to be snatched;' but it is equally good sense to say that he, like S. Paul, regarded it as a source or means of spiritual gain, either to himself or to others.

before, e.g., βούς, whether it has undergone the process of ἀρπασθῆναι or not. The *process* and its *object* then are here quite distinct, and cannot possibly be merged into each other.

Now all the instances quoted by Bp. Lightfoot are formatives from verbs taking internal or cognate accusatives, to which accusatives they correspond; they denote products which are dependant upon and inseparable from the producing process; process and product are therefore easily confused and shade off into each other. On the other hand, there could be no reason or excuse for confusing process and object where they are external to each other; and, as far as we can see, there is no instance of their ever being so confused.

But besides this somewhat technical and grammatical consideration, the whole structure of the sentence, examined closely, seems to supply additional evidence that ἀρπαγμός here retains its strict and proper meaning. The negative both by its position, and also according to the parallelism of verses 3 and 4, is seen to belong to ἀρπαγμός rather than to ἡγήσατο, the ἀλλά indicating what is contrasted with it. But, in order to be contrasted, two terms must be *in pari materiâ*;—if one term denotes an effect the other must denote an effect; if one denotes an attribute the other must denote an attribute; and if one denotes a process or line of conduct, the other must do the same. Now here the second member of the contrast is clearly a line of conduct, that of 'emptying' or 'surrendering self,' detailed at some length; there is, therefore, the strongest presumption that the contrasted term is of the same character; and since, as we have seen, this is also the proper grammatical force of the word, the presumption becomes a practical certainty.

(4) As to the precise force of the Aorists ἡγήσατο, ἐκένωσε, it has been pretended that these are limited and apply ex-

clusively to the point of time in Christ's eternal Existence, when by the will of God He became incarnate, and therewith (as is further alleged) divested Himself of some of the Divine attributes. Now independently of the metaphysical absurdity involved in positing a 'punctum temporis' in eternity, the common sense of the matter is against any such refinement upon our text. It is true, no doubt, as our schoolmasters teach when they are endeavouring to impress upon their scholars the comparative force of tenses, that the Aorist does (in spite of its name) denote a definite and completed act when compared and co-ordinated with an imperfect or present tense. Here, however, there is no such comparison or reference to any time-relation whatsoever. The question involved is not 'when' but 'what was Christ's 'decision?'—'what was the Divine character revealed, not 'when was the commencement of His revelation?' And this being so, the only tense in which the answer could be couched was that which in itself marks no time-relation, viz. the 'Aorist,' just as in Hebrews i. 9 (LXX.), we read *ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην*. But though this must be our view of *ἠγάπησας*, which simply expresses a decisive bent of character, it might be conceded that *ἐκένωσεν* may be interpreted of a definite act in time, on the ground that with it we may construe *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος*; and if this view is taken, we may with De Wette find such a *punctum temporis* in the hour of Temptation, when our Lord must have described Himself to His disciples, as deliberately choosing poverty rather than use His Divine Sonship for securing wealth and power.

But there is a further question as to the precise meaning of the words *ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτον*, viz. do they necessarily imply that our Lord emptied Himself *of* anything at all? We may say either of the empty bucket or of the water it contained, that it is *κεκενωμένον*, emptied out; and here it may very well

be, that the Apostle uses the word with the latter shade of meaning, viz. that Christ poured Himself wholly forth. This, at least, is more closely in accordance with the usage of the word in the LXX. (Jerem. xiv. 2, xv. 9), and finds a parallel in St. Paul's description of his own efforts to walk in His Master's steps<sup>d</sup> as well as in the familiar Messianic prophecy of Isaiah (liii. 12).

On the whole, therefore, I am inclined to contend that in using the word, our Apostle was not thinking of any one definite occasion, but of the character which never lost an opportunity of revealing and realizing itself by self-surrender for others. In no case, however, must we try to obtain, either here or anywhere else, a back-stair glimpse into the transcendental mysteries of God;—as if it were possible for beings of human intelligence to know anything of the Son of God before and outside of His phenomenal existence, as if we could in any wise determine the conditions under which, or the various steps by which, the Eternal 'Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Philosophy ought indeed still to be the handmaid of Theology; but if there is one service which she has undoubtedly rendered us in these latter days, it is to have shown us the intrinsic and necessary limits of our knowledge, and set us free from the illusory network of *à priori* speculation. The various questions of the kind which have been raised *à propos* of the passage under consideration are neither themselves legitimate, nor were they in the Apostle's mind at the time;—nor yet, we may add, if they had been, is there any room to suppose that their solution would have been more feasible for him than for us. On the other hand, in the phenomenal life of Christ whilst on earth as it impressed itself upon the consciousness of the Apostolic Church, we possess a firm and definite basis for theological knowledge,—for all the

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 15.

knowledge at any rate which we are qualified to demand, or which we require for the conduct of life. The attempt to get behind the Person, revelation, and work of Christ is philosophically as hopeless as the attempt to get behind the phenomena of nature; we must be content to know God (as we know things) in the manner and in the measure in which He is revealed or given to us.

It is forgetfulness or ignorance of such elementary truths of epistemology which has betrayed men into other absurdities, and has also prevented them from seeing the plain and comparatively simple meaning of the Apostle in our text. We have tried to shew what this is by exposition and paraphrase, but it is not so easy to give a succinct translation:—perhaps no *literal* translation of it could stand alone without risk of being wrongly or at any rate imperfectly understood. It is therefore with the greatest hesitation that we conclude these remarks by putting forward the following attempt:—

‘Who subsisting, as He did, in the form of God,  
 ‘deemed that the part of full and equal deity was not  
 ‘to seize anything for Himself, but—He gave His very self  
 ‘away, taking upon Himself the form of a servant when  
 ‘He was made in the likeness of men; and being found  
 ‘in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming  
 ‘obedient even unto death, and that the death of the  
 ‘Cross.’

---

The quotations at the head of this Sermon are second-hand. I came across them in Ritschl (*Theologie und Metaphysik*).

Other Sermons by the same.

1. 'NO CONTINUING CITY : ' A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. THE FITNESS AND EFFICACY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION.
3. CHILDREN OF THE FREE : A Plea for Rational Religion.
4. THE KNOWLEDGE OF 'JESUS ONLY,' Considered as a principle of Christian Doctrine.

---

*To be had of Messrs. James Parker and Co. Price Sixpence each.*







*The Tale-bearer and his more noxious  
Congeners.*



A LENTEN SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. GILES' CHURCH,

1898,

BY

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.

FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,  
AND VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD.



**James Parker and Co.**

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;

AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1899.

*Other Sermons by the same.*

1. **No Continuing City** : A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free** ; A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only'** considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**
6. **'Stewards of God's Mysteries.'** A Sermon for Embertide.

## A Lenten Sermon.

---

PROVERBS xvi. 27, 28.

*“An ungodly man diggeth up evil;*

*“A froward man soweth strife;*

*“And a whisperer separateth chief friends.”*

ON this Sunday in Lent I am going to preach upon tale-bearing, and for this choice of subject I am indebted to a dear friend and respected parishioner, who often favours me with criticism and advice, and who on this occasion added with characteristic candour, “You know that it is a fault “from which you are not altogether free yourself.” This remark has of course placed me under all the more obligation to make it a matter of searching enquiry. The text, however, with which I was furnished, did not seem to carry one very far. That ‘a tale-bearer revealeth secrets’ is after all but a barren and tautological proposition; and, indeed, if this were all that tale-bearers were ever guilty of, I do not know that he would be altogether such a reprehensible and objectionable person. For what is a secret? and what place is there for secrets in Christian families and a Christian society? Secrets surely indicate a state of opposition and hostility in which one person prepares surprises and lays ambuscades for another, or contemplates stealing a march upon him, or otherwise taking advantage of his ignorance. Secrets prevail, and are often very important elements in uncivilized and savage nations: and so we must not be surprised if children, who often reproduce the milder traits of savagery, take huge delight in a secret, in the knowing something of which their

comrades are ignorant, and in chuckling over it to themselves or with their confidants. The same tendency may often be noted in childish people.

But surely, dear brethren, to keep useful information to ourselves, to trade upon another's ignorance, or even to take pleasure in teasing another by withholding information, is anything but consonant with a Christian disposition; and therefore we say that whoever interferes and puts a stop to such a game is playing no evil part, though sometimes perhaps an unpopular one.

The mention of the tale-bearer, however, calls up very different characteristics both of intention and of conduct. Two if not three of these are described in our text; for others I am indebted to the *Secunda Secundæ*<sup>a</sup> of S. Thomas Aquinas; the remaining are described either from my own observation, or have been communicated by friends. They amount in all to some six fairly distinct species, which I shall enumerate mainly according to the order of their noxious qualities, labelling each like the entomologist with an appropriate name. I shall then proceed in the second part of my discourse to consider more closely their internal structure and economy, with a view to our guarding ourselves against those morbid tendencies of the heart and will, which cause mankind to degenerate into such mischievous and contemptible characters.

I. To begin then with the leading species allied to the tale-bearer, we can enumerate at least six.

1. *Proditor temerarius* (the Thoughtless Blab).

It is one thing to reveal and publish a secret which ought not to be a secret, and quite another thing to betray a

<sup>a</sup> Questions LXXII. and LXXIII.

confidence. We have many thoughts and feelings which we very properly do not wish to wear upon our sleeves, or we entertain half-formed plans which we do not wish published until we are prepared to carry them out, though at the same time we may wish to impart them to a friend. Or again, we may stand in need of sympathy and relief for an overburdened heart, or we may want advice and an independent opinion upon some project we are revolving. And if our friend inconsiderately betrays our confidence, we justly denounce him as a traitor. At the same time it is to be observed that this kind of tale-bearer is of all the least objectionable, because whatever may be the individual annoyance he inflicts, it is probably unintentional and cannot be regarded as injurious to society at large.

2. *Blatero hians.*

Another of the less harmful species is so familiar to all of us that we may pass him by with a very few words. We call him the *Credulous Chatterbox*, his leading characteristic being an excessive credulity, which makes him sincerely excited about the wildest improbabilities. He is of frequent occurrence in the cities of France, where he is popularly known as the *gobe-mouche*. Our less exciting climate does not appear to be so favourable to his development, and as the mischief he does is for the most part trifling and inadvertent, he need not occupy any more space where our object is mainly practical.

3. *Detrectator invidiosus* syn. *D. mordax.*

Coming to the more noxious and poisonous representatives of the *genus*, we shall mention first the Envious Belittlers. This species is the only one which I find described in the *Secunda Secundæ* of S. Thomas Aquinas, who compares it to the serpent which bites unseen, and who dwells

chiefly upon the secrecy of his habits and action. A more fundamental characteristic, however, is his distrust and dislike of anything approaching excellence. He does not believe in high and noble motives or in disinterested action, nor does anything stir him to anger so much as to hear these qualities praised in another person. It is then that his poison-bag overflows and his bite becomes dangerous. Not that he often ventures to strike openly ; his method is rather to nibble away a reputation with insidious doubts, by suggesting unworthy motives and ulterior designs. Again, as S. Thomas observed, it is not always so much by what he says as by what he leaves unsaid, that he inflicts the wound : an ominous and studied silence where a word of approbation seems obviously called for may often serve to insinuate that there is another and very different side to a story, or something too mysterious to be mentioned in the background.

#### 4. *Ardelio cloacatum*.

The fourth species in our collection is even more venomous than the last ; the *Detractores* were marked by a cynical dislike of excellence ; that which I am now going to point out to you positively revels in what is foul and evil like any dung-fly. He is known as the *Ardelio cloacatum*, or Busybody with the muckrake, and may with some certainty be identified with that "ungodly man" in the Proverbs "who diggeth up evil." Of all the species, this is probably the one most widely met with, and therefore it has sometimes usurped the name of tale-bearer, which has been limited to mean one who retails slanderous stories ; for you may speak good of your friends incessantly, and never earn the name. The cause of his prevalence is due to the fact that he appeals to a very general weakness, which is anything but



creditable to human nature. It is unfortunately but too true that, unless by God's grace we struggle against and overcome the temptation, we are all prone to derive pleasure and amusement from contemplating the mistakes, the follies, and sometimes even the sins of other people. What the precise cause and nature of this amusement is I shall not stay to discuss. Novelists understand it well enough, and very seldom succeed in making their story effective and interesting without having recourse to a considerable element of a more or less scandalous character. It is this evil instinct of our nature upon which the busybody preys, and which may, unless we are on our guard, cause any one of us to acquire the like character. He appeals to, and encourages a vulgar curiosity, and does almost as much harm to those who listen as to the unfortunate victim of his tale. This kind of tale-bearer, therefore, is especially to be avoided. Those who listen become accomplices in his sin; they are almost certain to catch the infection, and to cap one tale with another. Hence, perhaps, the rapidity with which this species is multiplied.

##### 5. *Rumigerulus tumescens.*

The fifth is by no means so harmful as the Busybody with the muckrake; but is introduced later because he is probably a hybrid between him and the 'gaping chatterbox.' We have labelled him '*Rumigerulus tumescens*,' the Self-important Newsmonger. His object and delight seems to consist in attracting attention, and for this purpose he is always on the look-out for some sensational information. When he has picked up some scrap of news which suits his purpose, he tricks it out to the best advantage, like any one else that has wares to sell. With this object he takes care not to let it all come out at once: he begins by dropping

hints with a view to exciting curiosity; he goes about with an air of mystery; he swells with the importance of possessing a secret which every one is dying to hear; until at last he fairly bubbles over with vanity; for better or worse the secret is out, and he shrinks again into his original obscurity.

#### 6. *Forficula susurrans*.

Our collection only contains one more specimen, though diligent search might no doubt be rewarded with the discovery of many other sub-varieties. This is known as the WHISPERING EARWIG (*Forficula susurrans*) and differs from those we have previously described by his exclusively parasitical habits. He is closely allied to the Detractor, whom he resembles in his dislike for all those whom he suspects to be his superiors. Like other timorous and cowardly animals, he keeps as far as possible out of sight and operates in silence. In the same way he is careful to guard against being held responsible for his own statements, which he either ascribes to common report, or to some unknown if not fictitious authority. Such, you may remember, was the old device practised by Sanballat and Tobiah when they went tale-bearing against God's servant Nehemiah; "It is commonly reported," they began, "and 'Gashmu saith it<sup>b</sup>.'" Gashmu, however, always proves to be an Arabian of nomadic habits, and never available for cross-examination. The commonest habit of the earwig is to attach himself to some one in authority, until by discovering their views or foibles, he gradually succeeds in gaining their ear. It is then an easy matter to watch his opportunity and insinuate something against those he dislikes,—but always, you may be sure, 'in the strictest con-

<sup>b</sup> See Nehemiah vi. 6.

*fidence.*' In this way, as our text truly records, he has been known to sow seeds of suspicion which have resulted in family dissensions, and in separating those who were once the dearest and most intimate of friends.

It is surprising indeed, and one may well ask how it is, that any one with ordinary loyalty and self-respect ever comes to admit such creatures into his confidence. The explanation is, that as long as we continue on the alert, as long as we retain vigour and energy to enquire and judge for ourselves, the whisperer will not succeed in seriously poisoning our heart and judgment. It is when our power and energy begin to fail, that he gradually gains possession and becomes inseparable, just as cats and dogs, and even the noblest beasts, when they grow old or diseased, are apt to become infested with vermin.

II. And so much for our museum of specimens. The more important part of our subject still remains to be considered, viz., how we can best guard against degenerating into their resemblance. Their mere exhibition and description will not be sufficient. Men and women sometimes grow, through sheer inadvertence, into the very characters which they would once most heartily have spurned. Our prophylactic must go deeper: we must guard the avenues of our hearts against those tempers and temptations which lead to gossip and tale-bearing in ourselves, or encourage it in others. For this purpose, then, we must look at the inward formation of these characters. We may indeed pass by 'cruelty and malice' as sins too gross, too full-blown for us to overlook. But did we not notice in one specimen the development and working of *vanity*, and the desire to push self into notice? In another, did we not see the *cowardice* which with back-biting and secret whispering does not scruple to insinuate the

slander which it durst not utter to the face? And these surely are just two of those constitutional failings which stand on the borderland of the vices, and which most of us have more or less cause to lament. But there are also two more deep-seated causes of gossiping and earwiggling observable in the specimens we have collected which are even more distinctively incompatible with a consistent Christian character. These are: (1) Jealousy, of which the chief root lies in conscious inferiority; (2) the tendency to think evil and to rejoice in iniquity.

(1) I say that jealousy, which is the root of malice, springs from our impatience and unwillingness to hold an inferior position, whether socially, intellectually, or in any other respect in which one man finds himself in competition with another. To one whose hopes and interests are centred in himself, such jealousy is natural enough. But the very essence of the Christian calling, and also of Christian Society, consists in the recognition of an universal or architectonic end, viz., the furtherance of God's will and God's kingdom in the world, to which all our own powers and our own aims should be subordinated. Hence it follows, as S. Paul so forcibly argues, that no one member can separate himself or his interests from the whole body; he cannot either rightly despise those who seem to fulfil an inferior function, neither can he look with grudging and jealous eye upon those who hold a position of greater honour; but, on the contrary, "if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." In this matter too we do not forget that Christ Himself was both our teacher and our example, rebuking those who sought for a place upon His right hand or His left in His Kingdom, and humbling Himself to move among them as "him that serveth." Therefore my friends, if we are earnest in looking into our own hearts this Lent, let us not forget to

search for this root of all bitterness, and whatever may be the talent God has entrusted to us or withheld, however lowly the post in which He has placed us, let us in all humility accept the decree of His Wisdom; let us cheerfully minister, if so it must be, whilst another reaps the glory, content if only God's will be done and His reign on earth extended!

(2) In the second place and also to conclude, let us set our face steadfastly against the habit of thinking evil, of rejoicing in iniquity, whether we come across the tendency in ourselves or in others. "Charity," we read, "beareth all things;" but in the original S. Paul's words have a far deeper meaning than this, viz. 'Charity is weatherproof against all things' like a good roof that keeps out rain, and wind, and snow. Even so we should keep our ears fast-closed against the sly insinuations of the Belittler, the Busybody, and the Whisperer. Instead of falling into the cynic's distrust of honest motives, we should believe the best and hope all things. We should resist the all but universal temptation to dwell upon the seamy side of human nature; but whatsoever things are honest, pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report—upon these we should think. For indeed, brethren, these are tales which we should never be tired of learning, and never tired of telling,—tales of energy and self-denial in well-doing, tales of cheerful patience in suffering, tales of open-handed generosity, of incorruptible integrity. Such tales; instead of impoverishing and poisoning nature, have ere now inspired sinking hearts with courage and constancy. They have opened the niggard soul, and in so doing have brought the sunshine of love into a life which had long been dark with morose and selfish cares, and made the useless hoard of wealth a blessing both to the needy and to the giver.

But one tale above all others there is which we of the ministry should never tire of telling, nor any parent or teacher who would implant the principles of a good and noble life in their children. It is the tale of Him who was at once the noblest of men, and the One true and complete Revelation of Deity. The sin of tale-bearing is very largely the result of spiritual and intellectual poverty, and you may safely infer that the man who is always talking about the small affairs and petty failings of his neighbour has nothing better to think about, and is devoid of all elevating interests. But he in whose thoughts the personality of Christ bulks large, who has been inspired by the hopes, the ideals, the interests which He opened up to our nature, will turn his face from the petty vilenesses and weaknesses which form the tale-bearer's raw material; he will despise the vanity and cowardice which set wagging the tongue of the newsmonger and the whisperer; he whose aims reach beyond himself will be incapable of the jealousy which chafes at another's advancement; he who is in earnest with the work of God will neither tell tales himself, or waste time in listening to them from others.

---

*'Stewards of God's Mysteries.'*



AN EMBERTIDE SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. GILES' CHURCH,

On the Third Sunday in Advent,

1898,

BY

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.

FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,  
AND VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD.



James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;

AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1899.

## NOTE.

---

THIS Sermon, written in moments snatched from a busy life, is only published at the request of some who heard it and professed to find it helpful. It does not pretend to touch upon questions of ecclesiastical polity or the necessity of the three Orders of the clergy; neither is it directly a refutation of Sacerdotal claims, which would have involved a doctrinal exposition upon the efficacy of Christ's Sacrifice. What I have attempted has been to follow out on New Testament lines the essential functions of a Christian minister as such, whatever his rank or position in the Church of God. Incidentally also it seemed necessary to shew how a very different, if not an incompatible, theory has arisen in the Church, and upon how slender a basis.

H. J. B.



## An Embertide Sermon.

---

FROM THE EPISTLE, I COR. iv. 1.

*“Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ,  
and stewards of the mysteries of God.”*

MORE than once we have felt it our duty to define and to expose those misconceptions as to the Universal or Catholic Church which would narrow down the Kingdom of God, and limit the grace or goodness revealed in the Gospel of Christ to a single outward corporation, whose corrupt developments we are in some quarters urged to emulate as the necessary marks of Catholicity. Enough to say that in this depraved use of the word “Catholic” we must repudiate Catholicism; we affix to it its true description, ‘Roman Catholicism,’ and appeal, like our reformers, to the Gospel proclaimed by Christ and His Apostles as alone truly Catholic both in scope and in obligation to believe. The formularies and rites which have grown up in particular Churches may often be objected to as obsolete, inadequate, or offensive to sincere and rational Christians, or, again, as unsuited if not unintelligible to races who do not share in the same spiritual inheritance of the ancient world; but of the Gospel, the good news revealed by Jesus Himself, we believe that its preaching appeals, and will ever appeal, to the Universal heart of Humanity, even as He commanded it to be preached to every nation under Heaven.

On this Third Sunday in Advent, however, a Sunday which falls in Embertide, when many are being called to the

ministry of Christ, our attention is naturally drawn to the position and function of the clergy in the Church of God; and therefore this morning I propose to do what in me lies to dissipate and expose the misconceptions which have beset this subject also. For though the subject is controversial, and in what I am going to say I may offend the prejudices of some present, yet in times like ours, when the subject is so widely debated, and when, as I firmly believe, opinions fatal to our position as believers in the Gospel of Christ are being persistently foisted upon us, it is our duty to speak boldly.

To begin with, let me point out to you a distinction, which in this and in many similar questions is deliberately and systematically ignored. It is the distinction between the question of fact and the question of right. We may at once concede freely to the Romanist and the Romanizer, that from the middle of the third century onward until the Reformation, for nearly 1,200 years out of the 1,800 during which Christianity has existed, the prevailing view has been that the Christian ministry was a sacrificing priesthood with unique *power* conferred sacramentally, i.e. by certain outward formalities of word and action. This power consisted (1) in being able to offer efficacious and atoning sacrifices for quick and dead, and (2) to grant pardons either after exacting penances, or (as in the case of Indulgences) excusing them. From this point of view the word 'mysteries' in our text would be, and in point of fact has been, interpreted as the equivalent of 'sacraments,' investing this term with something of a magical and irrational character. On this, the question of fact, there can be no doubt whatever; and if Tradition, if the mere enumeration of authorities is to be our criterion of what is right and true, then the sooner we all find our way to Rome, or bring our Church wholesale into line with her..

again, as the English Church Union are endeavouring to do<sup>a</sup>, —the better for us and for our country. But (1) as rational believers, i.e. as people who accept as the primary truth of Religion that the Word or *Reason is God*, we claim the right, or say rather, we recognize the duty of challenging Tradition and bringing it before the judgment-seat of Reason and Truth: and (2) as sincere Christians, i.e. believers who have accepted Christ as the express image of the Divine Character and His Words as utterances of the Divine Will, we maintain that the Gospel is not to be interpreted, adulterated or made of none effect by Tradition, but that Tradition must be judged, be received or be rejected, by reference to the Gospel of Christ. Instead, therefore, of allowing ourselves to be carried along the corrupt flood of development, and succumbing to a multitude of ecclesiastical authorities, we appeal, as our own National Church has taught us to appeal, to the teaching of Christ Himself, and to the same as put in practice by the Apostles.

Now in our text it seems to me that we have the clearest possible expression of what St. Paul conceived to be the functions of the Christian ministry, and that in terms which clearly look back to words of our Saviour Himself. "To you," Christ had said to the Twelve, "to you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom;" and in another place, "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom is like unto an house-steward, who brings out of his store things fresh and old." And in the same way St. Paul, probably with these sayings in view, describes himself and his partners in the ministry as 'stewards of God's mysteries.' At this point, however, it is important to keep clearly before us the meaning of this word 'mystery.' In vague and

<sup>a</sup> See the speeches of the President, Lord Halifax, during the last two years.

common speech, the words 'mystery,' 'mysterious,' and 'mystical,' are apt to be used in a sense almost diametrically opposite to their use by our Lord and His Apostles. They stand for something ineffable, something inexplicable, something secret and hidden, and for that very reason something dread and awful; so that those who are to handle and speak of them become regarded, and claim to be regarded, with something of the same awe which cannot and must not be explained, or even so much as questioned. Now I have no hesitation in saying that such a use of the word 'mystery,' and such conceptions of those who are 'stewards of the mysteries of God,' are utterly and entirely contrary to the teaching of the Gospel and of St. Paul's Epistles. You have but to turn back a page in your Bibles, to the second chapter of this Epistle (which is indeed the *locus classicus* upon the subject), where he says of himself and his fellow-ministers, "We speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery, even the "hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world . . . . "which none of the great ones of this world knew: . . . . But "now God *hath revealed them* to us by His Spirit; for the "Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God<sup>b</sup>." Now we *have received*, he goes on, "the Spirit which is of "God, that we might know the things which are freely given "to us of God." We are dealing with facts and laws, you will observe, of the spiritual world,—facts about God's Nature and Will, laws of human conduct and human destiny—which appeal therefore, not to our outward senses (the wisdom of this world) but to the soul and conscience of man. But to those whose souls and consciences have been awakened by the Divine Spirit, such facts and laws, so far from being mysterious, in the debased and ignorant use of that term, are clearly known through the revelation of God in Christ.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 7.

And to those who know not the mystery of the Gospel, it is the Apostle's duty, his calling, his joy, to "make that mystery manifest<sup>c</sup>" and clear, opening his mouth boldly (not mumbling with an affectation of awe, as if there were something ineffable in the background): but so that therein he "may speak boldly as he ought to speak."

So much on the general use and meaning of the word *Mystery* in the New Testament. We do not desire, however, to shelter ourselves behind phrases, or to put off our hearers with the 'vacant chaff' of generalities; and therefore we shall now proceed to follow the Apostle's example, and to declare as plainly and succinctly as we can what the *Mystery* of the Gospel is. In so doing we shall incidentally also clear up another point, and see with what truth and justice the Sacraments came to be called 'mysteries,' as they are in one place in our own Prayer-book.

The mystery of the Gospel, or the hidden Wisdom of God (which only ceased to be hidden when revealed by Christ), can surely be stated in very few and simple words, however profound and far-reaching the truth itself undoubtedly is. God Almighty, as almost all thinkers have agreed and all religions assume, must have had some plan and purpose in creating the world and the race of man. What that purpose was remained utterly, or almost utterly, inscrutable until the advent of Christ. Those who spoke or prophesied of it beforehand did not (so St. Peter alleges) understand the significance of their own prophecies. But according to St. Paul and the teaching of all the Apostles, the whole secret—all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge—were hidden in Christ, and by Him revealed to mankind. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily shape," i.e. in such a form that it was comprehensible by human faculties. And

<sup>c</sup> Col. iv. 4.

when chosen disciples beheld Him, when they saw His works of goodness ; when they heard His words, the words of eternal life, which fell from His lips ; when they had witnessed the final seal which He set to His message by laying down His life for Man ; when above all they began to feel the quickening power of the same Saviour after His exaltation into Heaven—then there was but one conviction among them, that a new truth had dawned upon the world which must change the whole cast and current of human life and society, and which it was henceforth the duty of those who knew it to proclaim and to apply. The first aspect of this ‘mystery’ or new truth for the world undoubtedly was the Fatherhood of God with all that this implied, viz.,—the rights and privileges of sonship, including forgiveness upon repentance (as described with such incomparable pathos in the story of the Prodigal Son), a second birth into the Heavenly Family, and infinite possibility of progress by dying continually to the past to enter into newness of life. And all this, possibly by Christ’s own ordinance, was symbolized and conveyed to the believer by Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Baptism accordingly, inasmuch as it symbolized and sealed the mystery or new revelation of God in Christ, came itself to be called a Mystery, and afterwards a Sacrament, because it was regarded as akin to the military oath which bound the soldier to follow and obey his officer. The case was similar with the Last Supper of our Lord. This, as the discourses at the time abundantly shew, was intended to be, in the language of our Prayer-book, a pledge or assurance of His own Love to the disciples, which was in turn the image of the Divine Love for all mankind. It was, moreover, a perpetual maintenance of the New Covenant, of which the distinctive features were three :—its motive lay in the affections not in fear ; it appealed to conscience, not to an external code ; and thirdly, in

order that none might despair of admission through the weight of sins, it included the promise of plenary pardon. "For this is the Covenant which I will make after those days," saith the Lord; "I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more<sup>d</sup>." Thus the administration of the Lord's Supper came also to be called a mystery, not on account of anything obscure or ineffable in it, but just because it 'shewed forth' in the clearest and most unmistakable way God's truth newly revealed to mankind in the dying love of our Saviour Christ.

The function then of the Christian minister, according to the teaching of the New Testament, is nothing more and nothing less than this:—to keep the Mystery of God ever fresh and glowing in his own heart, to proclaim it to all whose ears he can reach, to dispense it and bring it home to those committed to his charge through Christ's appointed means, the ordinances or 'mysteries' of the Gospel.

Such was the ideal set forth in the Apostolic age: "and then" (I quote the words of Bishop Lightfoot) "within a few generations it was forgotten. The vision was only for a time and then vanished. A strictly sacerdotal view of their ministry superseded the broader and more spiritual conception, and from being the ambassadors of God, they came to be regarded as His Vicars<sup>e</sup>."

It will here perhaps be useful to recall the line of development by which this priestly character gradually overgrew the gospel ministry, the more so because this history has repeated itself within the last fifty years in our Church. When the first believers met together for Christian worship, i.e. to join in the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week,

<sup>d</sup> Heb. x. 16, 17.

<sup>e</sup> Lightfoot's *Philippians*, p. 268.

they brought with them such offerings of food as they could afford for the common meal and for the poor. From these the presiding Presbyter selected a sufficient portion for the service, giving thanks to God for His gifts, and then proceeded to bless the Bread and Wine, and to commemorate the institution of the Last Supper, reciting our Lord's words of institution. After receiving, they would naturally join in hymns of praise and thanksgiving, the whole service being a reminiscence of the Paschal rite, in which the commemoration of Christ's Death and Passion was introduced. Thanksgiving, indeed, formed so large and leading a feature that the whole service gradually became known as *the Eucharist*, or *Service of Thanksgiving*. Thus it was not long before the presiding Elder was said to offer a '*sacrifice*' of thanksgiving, just as in Hosea we find the still more abrupt metaphor, "So will we render the calves of our lips." So far, however, it was obvious that the officiating minister was only representative of his fellow-worshippers, who had all equally been 'made kings and priests unto their God, to offer spiritual sacrifices.' In this sense our own Prayer-book uses the word '*sacrifice*' in the first post-communion prayer, and we may add that in this sense also our own Protestant divines of the last century, like good Bishop Wilson in his "Lord's Supper," maintained a certain sacrificial character in the Eucharist.

But as the ministry of the next century gradually succumbed to the ambition of figuring as distinctive priests, with exclusive powers like the old and obsolete<sup>f</sup> line of Aaron, they felt that in the Eucharist, as originally taught and practised, they had but a very slender basis for their pretensions. Accordingly they did then just what the innovators of our generation have done. They put an entirely

<sup>f</sup> Heb. x. 11—14.



new colour and construction upon our Saviour's act and words of institution; the words, "Do this in remembrance of Me," were explained as meaning that the Bread and Wine (now changed, as they began to teach, into the Body and Blood of Christ) was to be offered as a Memorial Sacrifice to the Father. In a word, the object of the Lord's Supper was not as heretofore regarded, and as our Prayer-book expressly teaches "that *we* should always remember the exceeding great "love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying "for us";" but that God Almighty should be reminded and memorialized for the benefit of those who assisted in the rite. Then, as the theory of Transubstantiation began to spread, the blasphemous doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood upon the altar was introduced; and with the assumption of this awful power, the minister of the Gospel was transformed into a sacrificing priest, no longer representing his fellow-worshippers, but the God whom they worshipped, first creating the Body and Blood of Christ, and then immolating it upon the altar. Later still, but springing from the same evil root, instead of the broken bread distributed among the brethren, which told how they "being many were "one loaf" in Christ, the wafer-host was substituted, imprinted with an effigy of the Lamb; and, most significant fact of all, the Ordination rites were elaborated, stamping the priest as separate from the layman, and pretending to endow him not merely with distinctive rank and authority, but with peculiar powers. It was upon this point that Pope Leo XIII. very acutely laid his finger, when, in His Apostolic letter last year, he pointed out how fundamentally Anglican Orders differed from those of Rome, and how (judged by a Roman standard) they lacked validity. When a Roman deacon is

8 From the longer Exhortation in the Communion Service.

ordained priest, the Bishop uses this form, "Receive the *power* of offering sacrifices to God, and of celebrating "Mass on behalf of both quick and dead," and therewith delivers to him the Paten and Chalice as the necessary 'instruments' of these sacrifices; and Pope Leo justly insisted upon the significance of the change introduced in our Church at the Reformation, by which, instead of the Paten and Chalice, the "Word of God" is given to the person to be ordained, and instead of *power* to offer Masses, the Bishop confers upon him "*authority* to preach the Word of God<sup>h</sup>." This change was emphasized and made more significant by the teaching of the XXVth Article, which expressly declares 'that Orders are not a Sacrament,' i.e. that there is no special gift of grace or power in the Conferring of Orders correlative to, or conveyed by, any special outward rite. This is why the word *authority* is substituted for *power*. Ordination then does not make, or does not necessarily make, a man competent to teach and dispense the mysteries of the Gospel,—this it is the Bishop's duty to ascertain before he ordains; but therein the Bishop, as himself the authorized official of the Church, confers authority on the priest or presbyter to minister in the Church. We can easily verify the justice of this view by experiment, i.e. by supposing a case in which there was no person publicly authorized to minister owing to some emergency, such as shipwreck (let us say) on a desert island. What, under such circumstances, would it be our duty as Christian believers to do? I will answer this question not in my own words, but in those of Tertullian, a father who wrote just as Sacerdotalism was for

<sup>h</sup> It is worth while to observe that in the Latin authorized version of the Articles, in Article XXXI. the word 'sacerdos' is employed in describing the function of a Roman priest, but in Art. XXXII. and XXXVI. (which relate to the Anglican ministry) 'presbyter.'

the first time beginning to assert itself, and who himself sometimes lent it no little countenance. "Are not we laymen," he asks, "also priests? as it is written, He hath made us kings and priests unto God. It is the *authority* of the Church which makes a difference between the clergy and the people. Thus, where there is no bench of clergy, you present the eucharistic offerings and baptize as your own sole priest. For where three are gathered together, there is a Church, *even though they be laymen*<sup>1</sup>."

We have endeavoured to shew that neither the general conception of the Gospel or Revelation of God's Will by Jesus Christ, nor the teaching of the Apostle Paul, nor yet the early practice of the Churches, lend any countenance to that view of Christian Ministers which regards them as consecrated Priests empowered to offer any atoning sacrifice to God. Such priesthood as they possess they share equally with the Laity, from whom they differ only in this:—that they have been publicly *authorized* by officials of the National Church to represent their people in the public worship of God, and to administer the Sacraments. Beyond this, which is only a *positive* distinction, there is indeed, or at least ought to be, that implied in our text, and which is far higher than any stamp ecclesiastically conferred. For to be a steward of God's mysteries a man must first of all have received them himself by the revelation of God's own Spirit. He must in some degree possess the gift of 'prophecy' to understand all mysteries, and that of 'interpreting' to expound them. Moreover, and above all, he must, as St. Paul insists, be found *faithful*:—if God has given him spiritual knowledge, it is not for himself, or his own glory, but that he may dispense it freely and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bishop Lightfoot, *ibid.* p. 255.

faithfully ; he must not suffer the mysteries to grow stale and musty and distasteful to the flock of God ; but, old and changeless as they are, if they are to reach the heart, he must bring them forth from his treasure ever fresh and glowing.

And is not this, brethren, a far loftier view of the Ministry than that which leaves them to mumble their mysteries like some charm in a dead tongue or in unintelligible tones, to insist upon blind obedience rather than upon intelligent insight, to serve God with mechanical rites and observances instead of in the worship of Spirit and Truth ? Nay, brethren, so much more lofty and exacting is this Apostolic ideal that he who contemplates it with earnestness and sincerity may well shrink from aspiring to take it upon himself, and ask, with St. Paul, who is sufficient for these things ? And to this question no other answer is possible than that given by the Apostle, nor any other source of power to be found except that upon which he relied. “ Such trust have we “ through Christ to God-ward : not that we are sufficient of “ ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God ; ” for He and He alone can make us able Ministers of the New Covenant. Amen.

*Other Sermons by the same.*

1. **No Continuing City** : A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free** ; A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only'** considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**

*In the Press.*

**The Tale-bearer and his more noxious Congeners.**

PRINTED BY JAMES PARKER AND CO.,  
CROWN YARD, OXFORD.

7  
“*The Wise-Woman of Tekoah:*”

A PLEA FOR COMPREHENSION.

WITH A NOTE UPON HOOKER'S VIEW OF  
THE NATIONAL CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

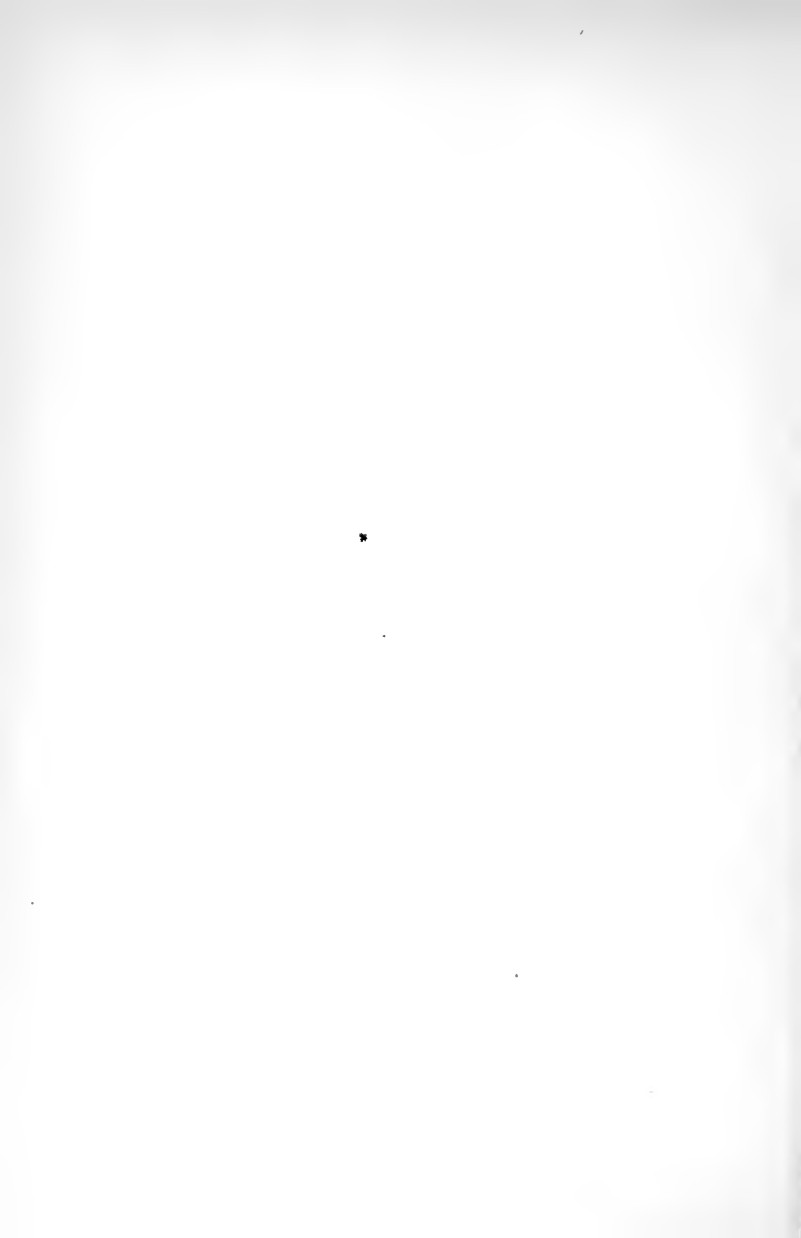
VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD, AND  
FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.



James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;  
AND 6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1900.





## P R E F A C E.

---

THE following sermon is designed to draw attention to a broad issue which cannot long be delayed, and to a broad truth which ought to determine that issue, but which is, nevertheless, for the most part ignored. Englishmen's ears have been so persistently assailed for the last half-century with language about their Church which suited the theories and purposes of the Oxford Movement, that we are in danger of forgetting the teaching of our own Articles and of History. Neither the mediæval theory of the Church as of a Corporation independent of all secular governments, nor the Genevan model of a State-theocracy applies to the Church of England. Ours is not the case of a Concordat between two powers, much less of the subordination and absorption of the State in the Church, but, as Hooker so ably argues<sup>a</sup>, of one and the same power, the same persons, the same Corporation in two different aspects. Except upon the supposition that the English Church and the English people are one, the State Church has no justification; for certainly no secular government can have right or authority to weigh the conflicting claims of Churches and pronounce in favour of one more than other, nor in point of history did any such action ever take place. The Church of England as reorganized by the Tudors included all Englishmen except Romish recusants.

<sup>a</sup> See Note. Hooker is of course contemporary evidence of the effect of the Reformation settlement.

The rise and separation of the Sects was due partly no doubt to the same obstinacy or mistaken conscientiousness of the Puritans which prevented their Divines from accepting the Bishoprics offered them by Charles II., but still more to the intolerance of the High Church Clergy and their Tory allies.

At a time when our Bishops seem prepared to strain the Law almost to breaking-point in order to countenance and retain the Sacerdotalist innovators of our generation, and when some at least of the latter are clamouring for the repeal of the Act of Uniformity, by which some of their most cherished practices are excluded, it seems only just and fitting that a word should be said in the interest of those against whom that Act was originally directed, and who submitted to expulsion rather than dissemble their convictions.

Within the limits of a brief and popular sermon it was necessary to confine myself to a single though prerogative example of the treatment which has driven the puritan element of our nation out of communion with the Church; but all that is said of Black Bartholomew's Day applies also to the attitude in which Bishops and Clergy viewed the revival of Evangelical religion by the Wesleys, and even that associated with the name of Charles Simeon, though in the latter case their attempts at expulsion were unsuccessful.

I hold no brief for the theological tenets distinctive of Puritanism; indeed I very much doubt whether they are held by any one in their integrity and original meaning at the present day. My appeal is to the English sense of right and justice and for fair play all round. My hope (which I believe to be shared by many both within and outside of the Church as at present constituted) is that the Church, instead of being disestablished and split up or

merged in existing sects, may receive a new and nobler lease of life as a National Church in reality as well as in name. In this way, perhaps, a happy solution might also be found for another problem which seems causing some anxiety at the present day, viz., the supply of Ordination Candidates. Young men who are conscious of possessing any talent naturally hesitate to seek office and employment in an institution which betrays so many symptoms of disruption, and is so fast losing its national character; whilst a large proportion of the diminishing number of candidates are either drawn from classes lower both in social and intellectual advantages, or are fired by a zeal which is partizan rather than religious.

But if the old ideal of a National Church were again to be realized, if in entering its orders a young man could feel that he was becoming a public servant, a Minister in sacred things to the Nation as such, if his tribunal and court of appeal were not the antiquated and dubious formularies of the past, but the living conscience, the living thought and learning of his countrymen, would not such a career prove a potent attraction to many who now prefer as laymen to occupy themselves in philanthropical work and literature? Besides this, if the repeal of the Act of Uniformity were so carried out as to be not merely a removal of disabilities but a recognition of the Nonconformists, an invitation on reasonable and acceptable terms to take office in the Church, it is obvious that a large accession might at once be made to the ranks of the Clergy, and that energies now employed in sectarian rivalries would become available for the higher work of evangelizing the Masses.

If on the other hand the process now going on is continued, and Disestablishment befalls us, the probability is that a very large proportion of our population would cease

to belong to any religion at all, and that of the remainder, those who were not absorbed by the Roman Church would join the Methodist or Congregational Communions; whilst the ancient fabric of the Church will be dissolved, and its noble monuments of architecture and munificent endowments diverted to secular uses.

H. J. B.

*St. Bartholomew's Day, 1900.*

# “The Wise-Woman of Tekoah:”

## A PLEA FOR COMPREHENSION.

2 SAMUEL xiv. 13, 14, 23, 24 (*Revised Version*).

“And the woman said, Wherefore hast thou devised such a thing against the people of God? for in speaking this word, the King is as one that is guilty, in that the King doth not fetch home again his banished one.

“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God take away life, but deviseth means that he that is banished be not an outcast from Him.

“So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

“And the King said, Let him turn to his own house; but let him not see my face.”

IF it were not for the reflected glory of the Psalms which by so many generations of readers have been credited to David, I am sometimes inclined to think that for true unselfish nobility of character we should give the palm to his loyal ‘captain of the host.’ Not only in undaunted prowess and a courageous energy which knew no fear was Joab more than David’s equal, but also in some of those higher qualities which mark a really great and noble soul. I shall say nothing of the incident of fetching water from

the well of Bethlehem when David was taking refuge in the cave of Adullam,—a deed of chivalry which Joab shared with his two brethren in arms,—and shall refer only to one prominent occasion previous to my text: when David in a vein of boastfulness and self-complacency ordered that census or numbering of the people to which was ascribed the subsequent pestilence, it was Joab, you will remember, who alone had the courage to remonstrate with the king to his face, bidding him to continue to put his trust in the help of Jehovah, and to persevere in the forward path of strenuous exertion rather than to tempt the Lord by reckoning up the numbers and material resources which he had already attained.

It is true that towards the very end of David's reign, Joab so far swerved in his loyalty as to support the claims of Haggith's younger son, Adonijah, in the succession; but this it must be remembered was at a period when he might well have mistrusted the king's failing judgement, and already have felt misgivings as to what might be the policy of the effeminate son of Bathsheba, misgivings which events proved to be not altogether without justification.

Turning from these incidents to the history before us, we see him at a critical moment in David's reign advocating an enlightened and magnanimous policy which would do credit to any Christian statesman; what is stranger and more remarkable still, he bases this policy not on mere expediency or the prescriptions of any human code of morality, but upon a view of the Divine character and attributes which all but anticipates the revelation of God which we enjoy, but do not always follow in Jesus Christ. Absalom had slain his half-brother Amnon; he had done the deed in righteous indignation at the outrage which had been perpetrated on his own sister Tamar. The brothers of Amnon,

however, proclaimed a vendetta against him, in which they succeeded in securing the king's countenance, with the result that Absalom, the popular and promising heir to the kingdom, became outcast and fled to Geshur. Such a serious breach within the royal family could not be continued without danger to the dynasty as well as to the stability of the newborn kingdom; and Joab, with the best interests of his sovereign and his country at heart, seized the first signs of relenting on David's part to attempt a reconciliation and the recall of the exile. It was a quaint and roundabout device which he employed to further his object. A widow is introduced from the remote district of Tekoah, who pretends to be in the same plight as the king himself, with a son in hiding because the rest of his family have vowed vengeance against him. To meet her distress the king undertakes to stop the feud and protect the exiled son; and thereupon the wise woman takes courage to speak unto the king the word with which Joab had entrusted her, and which forms our text this morning:—"Death is too surely the lot of "us all: we are as water spilt upon the ground which cannot "be gathered up again. Yet for all that God doth not "take away life, but deviseth means that he that is banished "be not an outcast from Him." From the lips of Joab and his confederate such a description of God's dealings with mankind may fairly astonish us. Even in Christian times and in formulating the mystery of Redemption, theologians have not always so clearly understood how God could be in the world reconciling the world unto Himself, but have invented the foreign and unscriptural doctrine of a satisfaction made to God before He would receive again His self-banished children.

It is, however, upon no such lofty reference of these words that I purpose to address you this morning. The

matter to which I would apply this plea of Joab and his wise friend from Tekoah is one which lies nearer home, and ought, as I venture to think, to weigh very heavily upon the conscience of every Englishman, at any rate of every English Churchman. For many generations our love of Country and sense of Nationality has proved strong enough to outweigh all political differences, and whilst asserting the utmost freedom of opinion between themselves, Englishmen have always shewn a united front in the hour of danger abroad, or where the public welfare has been at stake at home. But when from our national and political life we turn to our religious interests, and contemplate ourselves and our fellow-citizens not merely as a nation but as a Church of God, a very different state of things forces itself upon our attention, and one which is as full of danger as it is of sorrow. Almost from the very first, when England had asserted her independence of Rome, and under the Crown had been reorganized into a National Church, two types of character revealed themselves which corresponded (some might be inclined to fancy) with the two races which it had taken so long to fuse in secular life. There were always those whose sturdy independence of character would brook no semblance of the old tyranny from priest or prelate, even when these were no longer the officials of a foreign power. In spiritual and social relations they inherited the old spirit of the Lollards, whilst their convictions gathered strength and system from intercourse with the foreign reformers. But there were also those whose sympathies lay wholly with order and outward organization, who indeed were often only half-hearted in the matter of Reform, and if they could have had their own way would have changed little beyond abolishing the appeal to Rome, and a few of Rome's more flagrant abuses. The



former type was naturally found chiefly among the commercial and middle classes, though not without powerful representatives among the aristocracy, whilst in the world of learning and at the Universities they more than held their own. The more churchly character, on the other hand, prevailed among a large section of the nobility and their dependants, and among the military, and numbered of course a larger section of clergy. \* Yet however widely High Churchman and Puritan differed in the days of Queen Elizabeth and the first Stuarts, both found a place within the Church, both contributed to the public religious life of the Nation, both had a share in public preferments, and in many cases even ministers who altogether rejected episcopacy, and declined anything but Presbyterian orders, held public lectureships and professorships in the Universities. The spirit of comprehension and compromise, however, was not long to continue. The same policy which destroyed the Constitution for a time permanently maimed and mutilated the Church. The intolerant and unchristian policy of Archbishop Laud accentuated the divergence of opinion within the Church, offending the serious and religious-minded Puritans, even in matters which no one could judge essential, by petty ritual requirements, by forcing upon the Ministers the Book of Sports for Sunday observance, and otherwise giving only too much ground for the conclusion that the Episcopalians generally were wanting in christian earnestness and conviction. In the troubles which followed, however, it was only a political accident that Puritans were chiefly found in the ranks of those opposed to the King:—there neither was nor is any essential connection between evangelical religion and rebellion, and in point of fact the Presbyterians ended by opposing the Usurper, especially in the matter of the execution of the King. But though their poli-

tical associations were an accident, it was a fatal one, and laid them open to the attack of their unscrupulous opponents. Charles II. owed his restoration in a large measure to the goodwill and efforts of the Puritans, and (to do that unprincipled monarch justice) he was himself prepared to acknowledge their services and to fulfil the promises contained in the Declaration of Breda; but his more conciliatory policy was overborne by the desire for vengeance which animated the Laudian faction. Popular instinct does not stay to distinguish between a man's religious convictions and the political party with which he is connected; and it was easy (however unjust) to fasten upon the Presbyterians the odium of regicide and of all the troubles incidental to the Rebellion. The High Church party seized upon the moment of revulsion which was generally felt after the harshness and severity of the Commonwealth leaders, and appealed to all that was most wanton and thoughtless in the nation to crush their rivals. The Savoy Conference proved little more than a measure for supplying the requisite delay to mature their plans, and within two years the Edict of Banishment went forth. By the *Act of Uniformity* all that was best and soundest in the religious life of England was, morally speaking, sent into exile; with a few exceptions, such as Sanderson and Jeremy Taylor, none of King Charles' prelates had the slightest pretention to be named with the reformers for learning or piety. With coarse hands they were allowed to renovate, and to the utmost of their power deface, the ancient structure. The Reformation had left the question of Presbyterian orders open: they wantonly ruled them schismatic, and therewith alienated the Church of England from the sister Church of Scotland, and the reformed Churches on the Continent. And because they still endure, these evils constitute even a weightier re-

cord against the Churchmen of that day than the personal hardships which they inflicted upon their brethren on the Black Feast of Bartholomew<sup>a</sup>. Nor can there be any doubt as to the motive which dictated this disastrous policy:—there was no essential doctrine at stake; there was no danger of fostering rebellion among the Puritans; (that came later from the opposite quarter;) it was (we are obliged to confess it) revenge pure and simple on the part of the High Churchmen, not unmixed, perhaps, with greed excited by the prospect of vacant preferments, for the sake of which they did not scruple to appeal to all that was most worldly and wanton among their followers. In accordance with such motives were their subsequent congratulations at having ‘turned out the Puritans and got back Bel and the Dragon,’—the apocryphal book whose place among the Sunday lessons was a chief cause of offence to the Puritans; and when a certain Dr. Allen, speaking of the Act of Uniformity to Sheldon, Laud’s successor in intolerance as well as in the Archbishopric of Canterbury, remarked, “’Tis pity the door is so strait;” “’Tis no pity at all,” the Archbishop replied, “If we had thought so many of them would have conformed, we would have made the door straiter.”

Thus for no crime on his part, for no necessity of state, was our Puritan brother banished. Wiser statesmen saw, but saw too late, the mistake and wickedness of what had been done. Under the rule of William and Mary, and the more Christian influences of Bishops like Burnet and Tillotson, efforts were even made to bring them back, and a Comprehension Bill “for uniting their Majesties Protestant

<sup>a</sup> See extract from Green’s “History of the English People” appended.

Subjects” was read twice in the House of Lords. But what would have been an easy task, or no task at all, in 1662, became impracticable in 1689. The High Churchmen were afraid of the spiritual superiority of the Nonconformist; they did not wish any more competition for preferment. An old Spanish saying which had become proverbial as an excuse for refusing restitution was unblushingly employed to describe the situation, ‘*No es lugar.*’ The intrigues of Convocation and the Tory spirit of the Commons defeated the efforts of the King and his more enlightened advisers, and instead of the Comprehension Bill, an Act of the merest Toleration was passed. Like David’s grudging concession to Joab that Absalom might return to his own house, but never see the face of the King, so the Nonconformists were allowed indeed to worship in their own meeting-houses, but denied their legitimate place in the Church and in the councils of their Sovereign.

For two centuries this estrangement and dissension has been growing,—at once a reproach and a cause of weakness to the spiritual life both of the Nation as a whole, and what remains to us of the Church. This remnant, indeed, especially during the last fifty years, has been narrowing in its teaching and sympathies, until it is rapidly degenerating into a mere sect, already designated in some quarters as Anglo-Catholic, and unless this tendency is reversed, only one fate can be in store for us. England will never allow state privileges and endowments to be continued to a single sect; it was not on any such footing that they were preserved to the Church at the Reformation, but to the whole Nation as organized for religious purposes; and should a proud majority (if indeed a majority they may still prove to be) continue to exclude their Nonconformist brethren, we may depend upon it that Disestablishment and Disendow-

ment are in store for us at no distant date. This, I venture to think, seems the more certain and also the less open to complaint, when we remember that, like Absalom, the flouted Nonconformist has in respect of a very large stratum of our population succeeded 'in stealing the hearts of the men 'of Israel.'

It is not, however, to motives of fear nor yet of greed that as the minister of God I would appeal, but to Christian charity and the honest love of our country and fellow-citizens. In all essentials the Nonconformists are one with us: in all true departments of sacred learning we share each other's labours: it is only in the unreal and artificial domain of Ecclesiastical Law, of liturgical and ritual formalities, that the fires of controversy rage within the breasts of those who are occupied with these subjects. In many directions of Christian endeavour, in the relief of the sick and poor, of famine and pestilence, or the sufferings inevitable to warfare, —in the cause of Education, Englishmen of all shades of religious opinion work together: how long will they consent to hold aloof in what they profess to be the holiest and highest moments of their life, when they approach the same God and call to remembrance the One and Only Saviour of Mankind?

Oh! surely at this crisis in our Country's history and the course of this world, with the very tokens of Armageddon before our eyes abroad, and with such social problems facing us at home, it is high time that we closed our ranks as Christians, even as we are ever ready to stand shoulder to shoulder as Englishmen! But to bring this about something more is required than pious aspirations or those perfunctory prayers for unity which are sometimes offered while the spirit of pride and exclusion still holds the heart. Prayers are but the veriest hypocrisy unless those who

use them also devise such means as may be in their own power to bring about what they pray for; and if we are in earnest in desiring Reunion, we must be prepared for concessions,—possibly what unregenerate nature may deem humiliating concessions. Remember that it is the exclusive majority who are in the wrong; it was at least their forbears who committed that crime on the black feast of Bartholomew in 1662, for which amends must be made, and who procured the revoking of that freedom which has to be restored. Let it also be remembered that the means and terms of conciliation cannot rest with the Aggressor, nor yet altogether with his victim, but with the Nation whose voice can make itself effectively heard in one place, and one place only. It was Parliament which at the instigation of the High Churchmen closed the door against Nonconformists, and only Parliament can open it again. Nothing can be more misleading than to suppose that either Church Reform or a Bill of Comprehension could ever emanate from the Bishops and Clergy: even if our Bench could boast another Ussher or Tillotson, a Tenison or a Burnet, they would have no power to bring about their policy of Comprehension, though their voice and counsels might influence their countrymen in its favour. As matters stand, however, we have but to read the Church press or the pedantic ineptitudes of Convocation to be convinced of the hopelessness of looking for any large or statesmanlike policy from Church officials. Convocation indeed has no claim or pretence to represent the Church; it represents nobody but the Clergy, and amongst them only the narrowest and most professional element. Parliament, on the other hand, *does* represent the Church just because it represents the Laity as well as the Clergy, the Nonconformists as well as the successors of those who ejected them, and

therefore Parliament, as Richard Hooker<sup>b</sup> shews in his immortal treatise, is competent to determine questions of Church government. And lest any one should be offended by the possibility that in Parliament might be found some whom we are apt roughly to classify as Jews, infidels, or heretics, let us remember that in any case our treasure must be in earthen vessels, that no test, such as that of being Communicants, can guarantee either integrity of motive or soundness of judgement, and that God alone can overrule the counsels of men; nor perhaps is it altogether irrelevant to recall the fact that the very Creed which is justly regarded as the test of Orthodoxy, and which we all repeat at our most solemn service, was settled at two Councils of the ancient Church in which many Arian Bishops took part, and which were summoned, controlled, and manipulated by an Emperor who had never even been baptized.

It cannot be many years, perhaps only a few months, before this issue must come before the country, whether the Church is to be disestablished, or to be nationalized and made in reality all that its title implies, the Church of England. It is an issue which for thoughtful and religious people must dwarf and overshadow all other issues, whether of foreign or domestic policy. Let us pray that we and all our fellow-countrymen may be prepared for it; that we may put away the old leaven of malice; that our Nonconformist brethren may shew themselves placable and public-spirited. And in order that we Churchmen may prove worthy of our calling, let us purge ourselves of that prejudice and bigotry, that ignorance and snobbishness which has so often usurped and disgraced the name of Churchmanship, and let us seek first to be good Christians, emulating the grace of our

<sup>b</sup> See Note.

Lord Jesus Christ, who though He were rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and shewing ourselves children of that heavenly Father who sent forth His own Son to reconcile the world to Himself, and to fetch home again His banished !  
Amen.



## NOTE.

---

### RICHARD HOOKER'S IDEA OF A NATIONAL CHURCH, *Ecl. Pol., Book VIII.*

---

AFTER claiming for the Crown the same Royal Supremacy which existed among the Jews and 'the like power in 'causes ecclesiastical,' Hooker proceeds to set forth and refute the objections of the Puritan party, which, curiously enough, are almost identical with those urged by the Anglo-catholics of to-day. According to their view Church and State are, and must necessarily be, two distinct corporations, not merely in respect of the end and purpose for which they exist, but in respect of the members of which they are composed; or, as Hooker puts it, "they make a necessary separation, perpetual and personal, between the Church and Commonwealth, so that the same persons cannot have authority in both, and . . . tie down all kind of power ecclesiastical unto the Church," as if it belonged wholly and solely to those "who are by proper spiritual function termed church-governors<sup>a</sup>," and might under no circumstances belong even to Christian princes.

To this Hooker replies that the distinction between Church and State is one of words or definition, not necessarily of substance, i.e. the persons of whom they consist. In heathen lands of course the Church is necessarily distinct and separate in every respect from the heathen State; but it is equally

<sup>a</sup> Book VIII. c. i. § 2.

possible for one and the same body to be at once Church and Commonwealth—a Church in its religious, a Commonwealth in its civil organization. Thus in old times the Commonwealth of Israel, inasmuch as it had the truth of Religion was also ‘the Church of God,’ and the same is the case with every State which consists of Christian believers. “With us, therefore,” I quote verbatim these important words, “the name of a Church importeth only a Society of men united into some public form of government, and distinguished from other such societies by the practise of the Christian religion. With the Puritans on the other side, the word Church in the present question importeth not only a multitude of men so united and so distinguished, but also further the same body divided necessarily and perpetually from the Commonwealth or State:” so that “even in such a State as consisteth of none but Christians, nevertheless the Church of Christ and the Commonwealth are two Corporations each subsisting independently of the other<sup>b</sup>.”

‘We hold, on the other hand, that since there is not any man of the Church of England who is not also a member of the Commonwealth, nor any man a member of the Commonwealth who is not also a member of the Church of England; it follows that the Church and Commonwealth of England are in substance one and the same, differing only in name and definition, just as in the case of a triangle we may call any side the base according to the point of view from which we regard it<sup>c</sup>.’

In fact—to repeat once more what has already been advanced—the distinction and separation has been and may still be true wherever the body politic is non-Christian; but it is only accidental, it is not essential or necessary: it is

<sup>b</sup> Ibid., p. 329.  
Hooker’s argument.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. I have paraphrased and condensed

not, as Hooker says, personal or perpetual<sup>d</sup>, but, on the contrary, it is evanescent and tends to disappear whenever a kingdom of the world becomes a kingdom of God and of His Christ.

The next question which Hooker discusses is, Who has the power to make and enforce Laws for the Church? for Law, as he had shewn in Book I.<sup>e</sup>, is the very soul of a body politic, without which there can be no government or political society. And his conclusion is that in a Christian Commonwealth the persons who have power to make laws for the Church are the very same persons who have power to make laws for the State; and these (as he had already shewn in Book I.<sup>f</sup>) are the whole entire body of that Church for which the laws are made.

Hooker here points out the curious coincidence between the position of the Puritans and the Papists. There is nothing, he says, against which the agents of the Bishop of Rome contend so earnestly as this great principle, "that jurisdiction and spiritual dominion should be deemed "the right of the whole Church, and that no person can "have such jurisdiction except as derived from the body "of the Church," "*for as many (mark well his words) as draw "the chariot of the Pope's pre-eminence contend above all things "for this;—that the power of jurisdiction in spiritual things "is bestowed by Christ not upon the whole body of the Church, "but upon a Bishop only*."

The Papists in a word maintain

<sup>d</sup> VIII. c. i. § 6. There is no other way by which the separateness of the Church and Commonwealth can be maintained to continue in the case of a Christian nation "save only one, and that is, *they must restrain "the name of the Church in a Christian Commonwealth to the Clergy,* "excluding all the residue of believers, both prince and people."

<sup>e</sup> I. c. x. p. 239.

<sup>f</sup> VIII. c. vi. p. 396.

<sup>g</sup> Ibid. c. vi. § 2.

that spiritual jurisdiction only belongs to Bishops, just as the Puritans maintain that it only belongs to the governors of their Church, however they may be styled.

In arguing thus Hooker does not mean that all members of the Church, i.e., all the citizens of a Christian Commonwealth, either individually or collectively, should exercise spiritual jurisdiction—much less be a law to themselves. “The task of devising Laws which all shall be forced to obey,” he had shewn already in Book I.<sup>h</sup> was a duty only to be entrusted to wise men, or as we should say lawyers and experts. What he does insist upon again and again is that it is only by the consent of the entire body that such persons can be appointed to devise laws, or their laws enforced. The Crown may summon the Bishops or Convocation to devise Laws, but he does so in the name and with the consent of the entire body: and when they have devised Laws, the consent of the Crown and parliament are necessary to give such Laws force and validity. “Even the Canons of General Councils have but the force of wise men’s opinions till they be publicly assented to; and in giving such public assent as maketh a Christian Kingdom subject unto those decrees, the King’s authority is the chiefest<sup>i</sup>.” And once more exposing and confuting the objections of his opponents, Hooker sums up the conclusion of the whole matter, “to define of our own Church’s regiment,” or as we should say, to settle the laws by which our Church shall be governed, “*the Parliament of England hath competent authority.*”

<sup>h</sup> I. c. x. p. 245.

<sup>i</sup> VIII. c. vi. § 9.

## A P P E N D I X.

---

SINCE writing this sermon, my attention has been drawn to the following passage in Green's "History of the English People," vol. iii. pp. 361—363, which more than bears out all that I have said.

---

AN effectual blow was dealt at the Puritans in 1662 by the renewal of the Act of Uniformity. Not only was the use of the Prayer-book and the Prayer-book only enforced in all public worship, but an unfeigned consent and assent was demanded from every minister of the Church to all which was contained in it; while for the first time since the Reformation all orders save those conferred by the hands of bishops were legally disallowed.

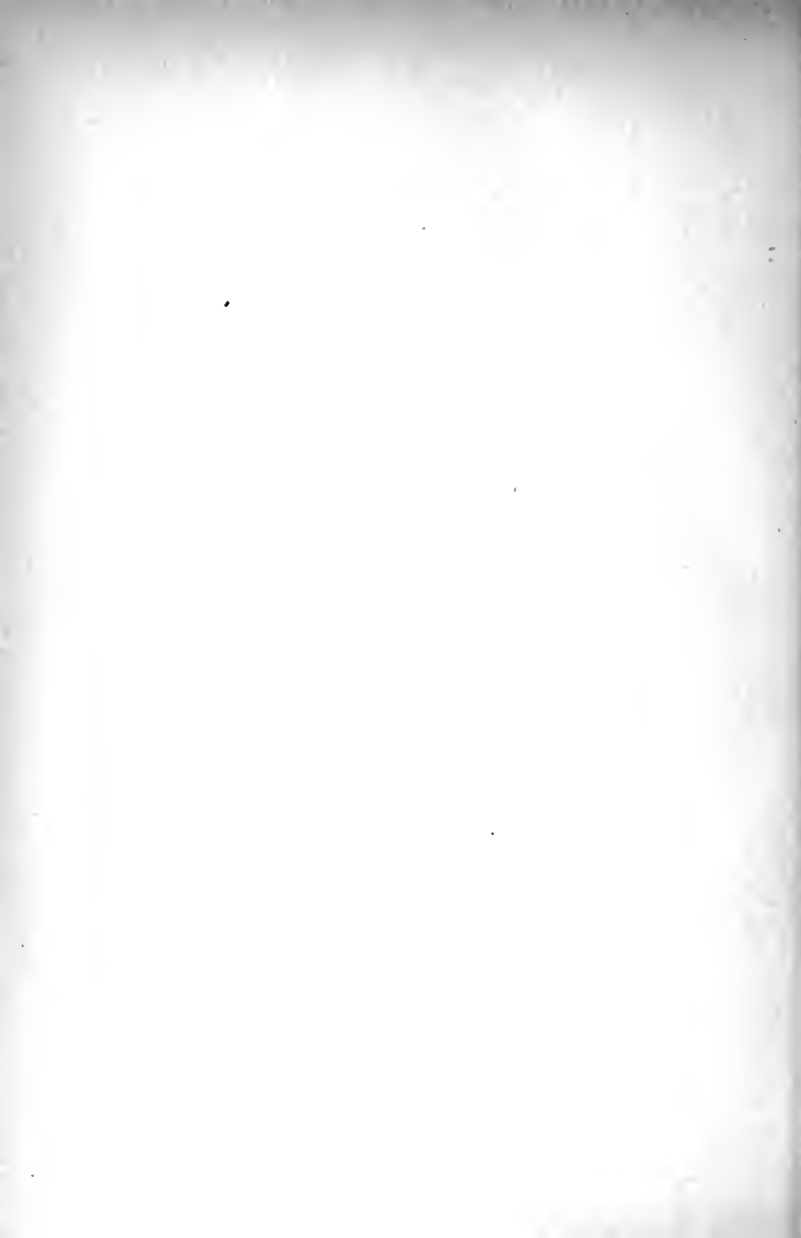
\* \* \* \* \*

No such sweeping alteration in the religious aspect of the Church had ever been seen before. The ecclesiastical changes of the Reformation had been brought about with little change in the clergy itself. Even the severities of the High Commission under Elizabeth ended in the expulsion of a few hundreds. If Laud had gone zealously to work in emptying Puritan pulpits, his zeal had been to a great extent foiled by the restrictions of the law and by the growth of Puritan sentiment in the clergy as a whole. A far wider change had been brought about in the expulsion of royalist clergy from their benefices during the Civil War; but the change had been gradual, and had

been at least ostensibly wrought for the most part on political or moral rather than on religious grounds. The parsons expelled were expelled as "malignants," or as unfitted for their office by idleness or vice or inability to preach. But the change wrought by St. Bartholomew's Day was a distinctly religious change, and it was a change which in its suddenness and completeness stood utterly alone. The rectors and vicars who were driven out were the most learned and the most active of their order. The bulk of the great livings throughout the country were in their hands. They stood at the head of the London clergy, as the London clergy stood in general repute at the head of their class throughout England. They occupied the higher posts at the two Universities. No English divine save Jeremy Taylor rivalled Howe as a preacher. No parson was so renowned a controversialist or so indefatigable a parish priest as Baxter. And behind these men stood a fifth of the whole body of the clergy, men whose zeal and labour had diffused throughout the country a greater appearance of piety and religion than it had ever displayed before.

But the expulsion of these men was far more to the Church of England than the loss of their individual services. It was the definite expulsion of a great party which from the time of the Reformation had played the most active and popular part in the life of the Church. It was the close of an effort which had been going on ever since Elizabeth's accession to bring the English Communion into closer relations with the Reformed Communions of the Continent and into greater harmony with the religious instincts of the nation at large. The Church of England stood from that moment isolated and alone among all the Churches of the Christian world. The Reformation had severed it irretrievably from those which still clung to the obedience of the Papacy. By its

rejection of all but episcopal orders the Act of Uniformity severed it as irretrievably from the general body of the Protestant Churches whether Lutheran or Reformed. And while thus cut off from all healthy religious communion with the world without it sank into immobility within. With the expulsion of the Puritan clergy all change, all efforts after reform, all national development, suddenly stopped. From that time to this the Episcopal Church had been unable to meet the varying spiritual needs of its adherents by any modifications of its government or its worship. It stands alone among all the religious bodies of Western Christendom in its failure through two hundred years to devise a single new service of prayer or of praise.





*Other Sermons by the same.*

1. **No Continuing City**: A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free**; A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only'** considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**
6. **The Tale-bearer and his more noxious Congeners.** A Sermon for Lent.
7. **Stewards of the Mysteries.** A Sermon for Ember-tide.

*In preparation.*

**The Blessedness of seeing and hearing Christ.**  
A Sermon for Sceptics.

PRINTED BY JAMES PARKER AND CO.,  
CROWN YARD, OXFORD.

*A Hope full of Immortality.*

---

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. GILES' CHURCH, OXFORD,

AFTER THE FUNERAL OF

THE RIGHT HON. FRIEDRICH MAX MÜLLER,

*ON SUNDAY, NOV. 4, 1900,*

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD, AND

FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

---

James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;

AND 31 BEDFORD-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1900.

*Other Sermons by the same.*

1. **No Continuing City:** A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free;** A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only' considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.**
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**
6. **The Tale-bearer and his more noxious Con-  
geners.** A Sermon for Lent.
7. **Stewards of the Mysteries.** A Sermon for Ember-  
tide.
8. **The Wise-Woman of Tekoah.** A Plea for Com-  
prehension.

*In preparation.*

**The Blessedness of seeing and hearing Christ.**  
A Sermon for Sceptics.

## A Hope full of Immortality.

WISDOM iii. 4.

*“ Yet is their hope full of Immortality.”*

JOHN xiv. 2.

*“ If it were not so, I would have told you.”*

THE celebration of the Harvest\* can never mean quite the same for a town congregation as it does for an agricultural village living in closer contact with the soil, and more obviously dependent upon its bounty for existence. Often again, as on the present occasion, it has been brought home to many of us how this, like other sights and incidents of the Natural World, must

“ take a soberer colouring from the eye,  
That hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality.”

And in any case, by keeping our festival so close upon All Saints’ Day, we cannot keep our thoughts from dwelling chiefly upon our own hopes of a heavenly harvest beyond the grave, and from scanning the world of Nature to find some countenance and support for those hopes. When, however, we examine attentively those lessons and analogies of the Harvest which form the staple of so many hymns and sermons, they turn out to be no true analogies at all. That economy of plant life in which we see the bare grain

\* *The day upon which this Sermon was delivered had previously been fixed for the Harvest Festival.*

entrusted to mother earth, there to germinate and reappear in fresh growth another year, tells us nothing and gives us no promise of the Immortality we long for. It is but part of the machinery appropriate to the vegetable world by which Nature secures the reproduction of the species,—of the same species under the same conditions. It contains no promise of a continued existence to the individual, or of a more perfect life under new and higher conditions. The lower world may supply us with parables and similes, or at best with proofs, of which the above is only one, of the boundless wisdom and ingenuity displayed in Creation; but if we would find true and trustworthy support for that Hope which is full of immortality, we must look elsewhere. We must look upward to God Himself, not to His meaner works upon Earth; we must look to the Divine or spiritual element in our Nature, not to that which we share with the lower forms of life. This is how our Saviour reassured the troubled hearts of His Disciples, when they were dismayed at the thought of losing Him for ever. He appealed to their faith in God, and in Himself as the revelation of the Father's goodness and Love:—"Ye believe in God, believe also in Me;" and again, "if it were not so, I would have told you." God who by trial and discipline gradually leads men out of ignorance and error, would never have allowed the hope of a more perfect existence to grow up uncontradicted; and Jesus who did not hesitate to summon men to leave all and follow Him, to hold cheap and even to sacrifice their earthly self and its life, would never have done this, had He not known of a larger life and more abundant joys to be found beyond.

The declaration however by which our Lord would reassure His disciples contains a more specific promise and suggests an independent argument. By calling the whole

Universe His Father's house, He would lead us to reflect that a uniform and consistent economy pervades its management in every direction ; and just as in a well-ordered household there is no waste, no effort without a purpose, no preparation without an adequate object to be fulfilled, so it must be in the household and kingdom of God.

Observe then that in those parts of God's Kingdom of which we can clearly judge, even those who dispute the truths of revelation have not failed to recognize a certain proportion between means and end, especially in the constitution of living creatures. Organ is everywhere adapted to function, faculty to its range of life, inasmuch that from a survey of the *instincts*, *perceptions*, and *powers* of an animal, the physiologist can determine with comparative accuracy the scope and character, and even the period, of an animal's life. Now in the lower Creation, however much these organs and instincts may vary, they never point to a life beyond the present for the individual. The same definition applies to each and all ; each and everyone is but 'a machine charged with powers, whether these be 'conscious or unconscious for preserving and replacing itself.' But in man, as he reaches his earthly perfection, not only do we see these same instincts and powers transformed, these powers extended beyond the requirements of his present life, but we find other provisions and other faculties which point to higher and ulterior functions. Take only that sentiment of wonder (which, according to the old Greek philosopher, was the very source and spring of wisdom), and consider how the mind of man is led by this instinct to pursue Truth for its own sake, ever seeking to trace its broken rays upward to some central Light. Consider again how in the needs of the body, and within the limits of our earthly life, neither Reason nor Conscience can find satisfaction nor an adequate

purpose and end for their existence. Slowly, perhaps, and gradually, yet none the less surely, the intellectual powers of man reach forward ever further and further beyond the limits of the bodily life until in the highest energies of thought Time itself is cancelled, and the consciousness which is not itself in time is attained, and worlds unrealized open their boundless vista before him †.

And if after all only the life shared with the meanest insect, life limited to a brief span of years, was to be the end of our being, why all this useless preparation? Why did God ever place eternity in the heart of man and lure him on by visions of perfection which Eternity alone can satisfy? All other delusions under which the human race has laboured have been in due time corrected by the progress of knowledge and the development of conscience; but this hope of Immortality, this divine unrest, has, on the contrary, grown in intensity with the growth of all that is best and highest in man. Surely, then, it is as the compass which points to his true and final destiny; it is part of God's silent revelation,—‘if it were not so, He would have told us.’ And “as the eyes of “all wait upon Him, and He giveth them their meat in due “season,” even so He will not fail to satisfy the longings of the noblest of His creatures who cannot live by bread alone. If not in this world, yet in the Great Household of God, in His vast Kingdom, there are many mansions, i.e., many ‘halting-stages’ on our upward journey; and in our text He has assured us that wherever our souls shall rest, whatever the new conditions of our existence, whether in the body or out of the body, or clothed afresh with some more glorious taber-

† The argument here briefly indicated will be found very beautifully and forcibly worked out in Dr. Martineau's ‘Study of Religion,’ Bk. IV. c. iii.



nacle—there shall those who are Christ's find a place prepared for them by His presence : there shall His hand still lead them and His arm uphold.

There can then, my friends, be no surer consolation when one beloved is taken away, than to be able to look back upon his life and his life work in this earthly mansion of the Father's house, and there to trace the development and growing evidence of powers and faculties which reach beyond this mortal life, to watch the increasing interest in things not seen as yet, the hope full of immortality. And in few men has such a hope and promise of immortality been more clearly marked than in him whom so many throughout the world, both east and west, are mourning in common with ourselves who knew him as a fellow-citizen and a fellow-worshipper in our Parish Church. The daily prints have vied with one another in setting forth his career as a scholar, as a lecturer and a writer of consummate literary skill ; but something still remains to be said, which I think may be appropriately said from this place, of the elevation of soul and enlargement of mental outlook which was revealed as his life's work opened up before him, something also of his characteristics as a man and a friend.

A great philosopher used to illustrate the development of moral ideas out of the self-regarding needs of the individual by reminding his pupils of God's choice of Saul, who set out to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom. So it has been with many a great man, and so it was with Max Müller. He had laboured patiently into middle life before his real work and message to the world fully dawned upon him. At first his interests were almost purely those of the scholar, studying first under the most eminent professors of his native land, then in the libraries of Paris and of the East India Company in London, until at length a happy combination of

circumstances brought him to this University. And perhaps, if the post, which by every right of learning, of industry and of actual achievements should have been his, had been accorded him, a mere scholar, though one of the most learned, he would in all probability have remained. But here the Almighty, who has so often declared His wisdom and power by turning the fierceness of man to His own praise, overruled the bigotry of mistaken religionists to the intellectual gain and spiritual advance of His servant. The new chair of Philology led him forward to the comprehensive and master sciences of Thought, Language, and Religion. Young Oxford, who now vote his lectures old-fashioned, forget that he was the pioneer who opened up the road which they have followed, that he introduced the Science of Language into this country, and was to all intents and purposes the first to apply the Comparative method to the study of Religion. For this enterprise all his old studies in Sanskrit, his training in philosophy, his matchless knowledge of Ancient Indian thought, his laborious investigations into Ethnology, seemed to have been providentially combined; so that when a few years ago he was appointed Lecturer on Religion under Lord Gifford's munificent trust, he could look back upon his life and say, that the work which he had begun so humbly at Leipzig in 1843 was 'being brought to its final consummation at Glasgow' in 1889.

As we have had occasion to refer to the prejudice and opposition which he met with from some conservative theologians forty years ago, it is only right to mention one striking and honourable exception, to which our friend was always ready to testify with unfading gratitude and affection. Dr. Pusey, with a cosmopolitan appreciation and sympathy for learning, befriended Max Müller from his first arrival in Oxford, worked strenuously on his behalf when he was a candidate for the

Boden Chair of Sanskrit, and maintained a friendly interest in his work far into his old age. The single-hearted young scholar would seem to have drawn out the very best side of the great Doctor's character, appealing, as he did, not to the hierophant of the Catholic revival but to the man of genuine goodness and learning. When, however, he tried to discuss religious questions in their more fundamental aspects and to face with him the deeper problems of thought, Dr. Pusey declined, telling him at the same time with great earnestness that he had once in his life approached these subjects, when it seemed to him as if an awful abyss opened up before him, from which he had ever since shrunk with terror, and from which he felt it his duty to hold back all whom he could influence. With a stronger faith in the God of Truth, and with the courage which such faith alone can inspire, young Max Müller went on the way he had marked out for himself, undaunted either by the vastness of the questions which faced him or by the tremendous issues which they raised. And he found his reward. In the primordial and universal institutions of the Infinite in which he found the raw material of all Religions, he found also, as he firmly maintained, a true and solid foundation for his faith in God and in the Gospel of Christ, which he steadfastly held to be the full and final revelation to mankind of the Divine Fatherhood and of our own Divine sonship.

In accordance with this conviction his message to the world was twofold. On the one hand it was to vindicate the claims of Natural Religion to be as 'the im-  
'pregnable rock of eternal and universal truth<sup>a</sup>'; and on the other hand to show how the religion of Christ fulfils, and only by fulfilling can supersede all other religions of the world. No one, he said in concluding his Lecture at Leeds

<sup>a</sup> Gifford Lectures, 'Physical Religion,' p. 366.

upon the Vedas, "no one who has not examined patiently "and honestly the other religions of the world can know what "Christianity really is, or can join with such truth and "sincerity in the words of St. Paul, 'I am not ashamed of "the Gospel of Christ.'" It was only a fortnight before he was taken from us that I made bold to remind him of this utterance, finishing the verse of St. Paul. "Yes," he replied, trying to raise his voice, "I remember, and in that I have never "wavered." On the other hand he held that the principal cause of unbelief at the present day was "the neglect of our "foundations, the disregard of our own bookless religion, "the almost disdain of natural religion." To base religion upon the verbal inspiration of a book, upon miracles, or upon ecclesiastical authority, was like trusting for the support of a building to wooden props or scaffolding, with the decay of which the whole building must fall. "Natural Religion," he concludes, "may exist without revealed religion; revealed "religion without Natural Religion is an impossibility<sup>b</sup>."

These studies and these convictions naturally gave him a great interest in missionary enterprize, though he could not in every case approve of missionary methods. He had the strongest aversion for those mistaken champions of Christianity who cannot recommend the salvation and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ except by vilifying human nature. 'While some of our missionaries,' he writes, 'are delighted 'when they meet with some of the fundamental doctrines 'of our own religion expressed almost in the same words 'by so called pagans, others seem to imagine it robbery that 'any truth at all should be found in non-Christian religion.' This is why we find him referring so often to the speeches of St. Paul at Lystra and at Athens, which boldly assert

<sup>b</sup> 'Natural Religion,' Lect. XX. pp. 569, 570. 'Physical Religion,' Lect. XIV. p. 332.

that even among the heathen God had not left Himself without a witness both in the bountiful gifts of Nature and also in that unsatisfied want of the soul within, which prompted them to 'seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, 'and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.' Again and again in his writings we find him pausing, it may be in some noble passage of the Vedas or Upanishads, or it may be in some traveller's account of rude and savage races, to dwell upon the testimony which they afford to the universal truths of Religion and of human Nature.

"He liked," so he tells us, "to recall the story of the old Samoyede woman whom Castrén met in his travels, and asked about her religion. Poor soul, she hardly understood what he meant and why he should ask her such a question. But when at last she perceived what he was driving at, she said: 'Every morning I step out of my tent and bow before the sun, and say: "When thou risest, I, too, rise from my bed." And every evening I say: "When thou sinkest down, I, too, sink down to rest."' That was her prayer, perhaps the whole of her religious service,—a poor prayer, it may seem to us, but not to her, for it made that old lonely woman look twice at least every day away from earth and up to heaven; it made her feel that her life was bound up with a larger and a higher life; it encircled the daily routine of her earthly existence with something of a divine light. It gave her the sense of a Beyond, and that is the true life of all religion. Is there not something of the simple religion of that old Samoyede woman even in the familiar lines of Bishop Ken,

'Awake, my soul, and with the sun  
Thy daily stage of duty run?'

The same sympathy that reached out to whatever was good and true in the stammering utterances of primeval or savage religions also coloured his friendships, and indeed his intercourse with all whom he came across. In this respect the de-

scription of Dean Stanley, which he wrote to Chunder Sen just after the Dean's death, applies in every detail to himself. "One could speak to him unreservedly, almost thoughtlessly. One knew he believed all one said. He would forgive even a stupid and silly remark, and interpret every man according to the best meaning of which he would admit. It was a treat to speak with him, and to find that he really took one for better than one was—*it made one better.*" Indeed in talking with him, one was sometimes reminded of his friend Matthew Arnold's lines on "The Buried Life";—

" Only, but this rare,  
 When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
 When jaded with the rush and glare  
 Of the interminable hours,  
 Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear ;  
 When our world-deafened ear  
 Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed,—  
 A bolt is shot back somewhere in the breast  
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again,  
 The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
*And what we mean we say, and what we would we know."*

It was no wonder that such a man was widely beloved, that even the native philosophers and sages of India who had never met him, but whom he had helped to understand what was best and truest in their own religion and sacred books, trusted him and sought his instruction and guidance. Again and again they owned him to be a true teacher ; they sent him the sacred Brahminical thread which is the symbol of the second birth, and of the right to understand the highest wisdom of the Vedanta. More than once upon the death of a parent, they even wrote asking him to recite those old Vedic Hymns for the departed, which wish them Godspeed on their long journey towards the throne of God ;

and among the many proofs of affection which he received during his last illness, not the least touching nor the least valued (as I know), was a letter from an Indian admirer, telling him how the writer with two friends had persuaded the priest of their Temple to perform the appropriate service for his recovery, and forwarding a small portion of the offering which had been made. These few poor withered leaves and flowers, indeed, never reached him, but they are safe somewhere in God's treasure-house, not far, I think, from the alabaster box of ointment, and the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple.

For the same reason his house in Oxford was as a place of pilgrimage to the best and wisest of all nations, but above all to the saints and sages of the East, whether Brahman or Buddhist. He has himself given a memorial, which many of you will have read, of his Indian friends who from time to time visited him or corresponded with him; and only last August the first and only Swâmi, or Saint, who ever came to this country made his way, with his young disciple or *chelah*, to Norham Gardens. A genuine Mahatma, a Yogin, or one who had mastered all that was to be gained by the ascetic discipline of the East, he held a considerable position in India as a teacher, and impelled apparently by the pure desire to impart what he believed to be the highest knowledge, he came friendless and unknown to this country. Disappointment was of course inevitable. 'He had come,' so he said to me, in his quaint stilted English, 'to teach men the subtle enigmas of existence; but England was like a poisonous fruit, fair and attractive to view but full of deadly juice: there were no good men, no one who wanted to understand knowledge: only in this house,' he said, pointing upstairs to where the Professor had retired exhausted with his interview, 'have I found a good man and

'one who knows.' Later on the Professor was able to come down again, and I shall never forget the scene on the garden terrace when this representative of Ancient India, clad in turban and kaftan, took a last farewell of India's friend and champion. 'My life is nearly over,' said the Professor, 'I shall never be able to do any more work;' and the other placing a hand on either shoulder, and looking long and fixedly into his face, replied, 'Yes, I see death has come near you, friend; he has looked you in the face.'

Time fails me to tell the half that is in my heart and memory; and even if I had succeeded in commemorating our friend as the scholar and philosopher of Religion, we should still have left the better half untold. Behind the scholar was the citizen, the man; behind the philosopher the husband and the father, faithful 'in all his house;' but there we should be treading on ground too holy for stranger feet. Once at least however he drew aside the veil and gave the world a glimpse into his noble heart. His "*Deutsche Liebe*," first published nearly fifty years ago, reveals a soul which could realize itself only in that highest and purest affection which links earth to heaven; and the twenty editions, English, French, or German, through which it has passed, prove how true and genuine was the note he struck. But he himself on one occasion quoted with characteristic delight a more ancient testimony:—"Thousands of years ago," so he writes in one of his Glasgow Lectures, "we read of "a husband telling his wife, 'Verily a wife is not dear in order that you may love the wife, but in order that you may love the soul, therefore a wife is dear.'" What does this mean? he asks. It means that "true love consists not in loving what is perishable, but in discovering and loving what is "eternal in man or woman e."

e 'Anthropological Religion,' p. 345.



Poor and unworthy as our tribute to his memory has been, enough we trust has been said to show how all his life and life's work on earth reached forth to something beyond, and was irradiated by a hope full of immortality. In what mansion, what fresh halting-place in the Father's Kingdom he is now resting, we cannot conceive or know; but this we know:—that when we draw nearer to God, we draw nearer to him, that it is the Son of God Himself who has prepared a place for him, and so often as we in Christ have fellowship with the Father we still have fellowship with him; and not ourselves only, but all who in time past have felt and followed that whisper of Eternity which God has placed in the heart of man.

Empress and Kaiser, the Kings of arctic Sweden and tropical Siam, cherish his memory with loving regret; in this parish church, where in health he worshipped for so many years, we remember him before the throne of Grace; and may we not admit into the Community of our Sorrow those seekers after God in the Ancient East, whose thoughts he tried so faithfully to read and bring to light? Nay, the very hymns and prayers which they hold in such reverence and which they will be reciting on his behalf when they hear of his departure from this world,—may they not find an echo in a Christian Church and in Christian hearts?

As I read them they seem to call upon Agni, the sacrificial fire, to deal gently with the immortal soul whilst purifying it for the upward journey. The earthly body and earthly senses they commit to the elements, to the sun and air; but still recognizing the true imperishable Self, they speed it forth to those fields of Light, where, as they believed, Yama the father of mortals reigned beyond the setting sun.

“O Agni! do not burn him altogether! Let the eye go to the sun, and the breath to the wind! Go to sky or earth as is right,

“ or to the waters, if it is good to be there. But the immortal, the  
 “ unborn part,—warm it with thy heat and flame! Carry him  
 “ in thy kindest shape to the world of those who have done well.

“ Leave sin and evil! seek anew thy dwelling and bright with  
 “ glory wear another frame!

“ Go forth, go forth upon the ancient pathway, whither our  
 “ fathers of old have gone before!

“ Meet Yama, meet the fathers! find with them the merit of  
 “ free and ordered acts in highest heaven.

“ To those who of old followed the right, who did the right, who  
 “ increased the right, to those also may he go<sup>d</sup>!”

Uttered first by the old Rishis or prophets of the Vedas more than 3,000 years ago, they are no doubt clothed in language which still closely reflects the world of sense. Nevertheless you will admit (as I think I can hear him pleading), that those who could ‘say such things declare plainly that ‘they seek a country,’ ‘a mansion in the Father’s house;’ and that they, like us, could look beyond the grave or funeral pyre with ‘a hope full of immortality!’

<sup>d</sup> See ‘Anthropological Religion,’ pp. 250—252.

7  
"The Blessedness of seeing and hearing  
the Christ."

(A SERMON FOR SCEPTICS.)

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD ;

FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

---

James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD ;

AND 31 BEDFORD-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1902.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

THE following sermon does not pretend to discuss, much less to decide upon, the miraculous element in the gospel story. In it I have endeavoured to set forth such claims as I can conceive Christ to possess independently of any such element, independently even of the Resurrection. It seems to me that if the Disciples were in a position to own Him as the Son of God before the Resurrection, and when they knew Him only as the Carpenter's Son, we may in the same sense and with the same truth make the same venture of Faith. This conviction once gained, we may be prepared to modify our first view of the 'mighty work' as recorded in the Gospels; and with regard to the Resurrection we might even, like St. Peter, learn to look upon it as no miracle at all<sup>a</sup>, but as only what was to be expected of Him Who had revealed Himself both as Truth and Life.

With Ritschl indeed we must still renounce all those ontological dogmas concerning the Deity and Person of Christ, which when analysed only prove to be the product of a verbal dialectic, and which fatally pervert and distort our conception of Christ.

With Ritschl, therefore, we must bear the reproach that all propositions concerning God and His Christ, all the articles of our faith whether expressed in the old forms or in new, are what are known in Logic as 'Value-judgements' (Werth-Urtheile), i.e. they express our own inward and spiritual convictions. But this surely is just what was understood from the very first by the Apostles, who appealed

<sup>a</sup> See Acts ii. 24.

always to their own experience and the witness of the Spirit within them. St. Paul especially states this fact in the most explicit language (1 Cor. i. 23, 24; xii. 3). So does St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 7).

In fact Belief, as Dr. Pusey somewhere happily expressed himself, 'moves in a different plane,' not only from Natural knowledge, but also (if knowledge it can be called) from Ontological. In this respect, however, it does not differ from our moral convictions, which neither scientist nor metaphysician have ever been able to account for without assumptions which transcend their own *principia*. We do not claim that Christian beliefs are objective to the scientific intellect which very properly declines to receive them; but whatever objectivity is claimed for the convictions of the practical reason in the sphere of conduct, that also we claim for our spiritual convictions concerning God and the Son of God and His work in our own souls.

Nothing which can be written, and nothing certainly which I have written, can prevail against a consistent naturalism or materialism. The appeal of the Christian Apologist is to the Courts of Spirit and Conscience. Where these are not recognized, the appeal must necessarily be in vain; and even where they are, I fear the Judge will be inclined to say with Agrippa—

*ἐν ὀλίγῳ μὲ πείθεις Χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.*

H. J. B.

*St. Bartholomew's Day, 1902.*

## “The Blessedness of seeing and hearing the Christ.”

---

LUKE x. 23, 24.

*“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”*

AGAIN and again as we read the records of our Saviour's life, we are met by utterances and claims which from the lips of any other being would be judged almost ludicrous in their presumption, but which have come to be accepted as so congruous and fitting in Him, that if anything we read them with too little thought and attention. Of this character surely are the words of our text, in which the followers of Jesus are solemnly assured that they were the privileged witnesses of what the best and wisest men of past ages had longed in vain to behold, that the answer to all the desires and longings of the world was being imparted to their ears.

No doubt we ourselves, like many others, have passed by this and similar declarations as scarcely removed from the obvious; and a vacuous generality is perhaps all that it may appear when viewed from the lofty pinnacles of dogmatic theology. But to men and women who demand that the Saviour should be to them a reality,—who want to know the blessedness, if blessedness there be, in following and learning of Christ, such words are a standing challenge to seek Him

afresh, and find Him for themselves not as a lay figure decked out in the bizarre garments devised by successive generations of priests and scribes, but as the Son of Man dwelling among the sons of men. Whatever may be our eventual beliefs and conclusions, this must be the first step towards a real and living knowledge of Christ, even as it was the order and method designed by Providence. This was the way at least and these the conditions under which those first blessed ones learnt to believe in Him and to trust Him, and to confess that He was indeed the Son of the living God.

But how, it may well be asked, is such an acquaintance with Christ possible for us? how can we see and hear and follow Him? As a Christian poet has sung—

“Dim tracts of Time divide  
Those golden days from me;  
Thy voice comes strange o'er years of change;  
How can we follow Thee?”

“Comes faint and far Thy Voice  
From vales of Galilee;  
Thy vision fades in ancient shades;  
How should we follow Thee?”

From opposite quarters but on different grounds we hear the same answer, that what we seek is impracticable. One will say that the world has moved on too far, that the ideals and faith of one age cannot be reproduced in later centuries; and others will try to build out of our difficulties a monopoly for themselves, telling us that the only way in which we can still learn of Christ is by returning to the authoritative teaching of a Church which can guarantee the miraculous evidence upon which alone His claims upon our faith can be based.

It is to those who cannot content themselves with either

of these answers, that I address this sermon—to those who on the one hand will not admit that Time can

‘. . . undo what once was true,’

and on the other hand can neither recognize the gentle teacher of Galilee in the Christ of dogma, nor base their faith upon the uncertified traditions and claims of any fallible Society.

We must therefore divest ourselves of that conventional medium of miracle and dogma through which we are apt to view the Gospel story; which robs it of all reality and, like an ill-fitted lens, fringes every object alike with the same prismatic glitter. Whatever may be our ultimate conclusion as to the character of His mighty works, we cannot receive them as breaches of natural law, as miracles in the vulgar sense of the word. Whatever may have been the advantages which His first followers had in this respect, we can now only read and interpret the record just as we should read similar reports from any other age or quarter.

Here then, as everywhere, we must begin as the cautious old Greek used to say, with what is intelligible and nearest to ourselves, i.e. with what is open to actual, or at least to possible, experience, with what is indubitably real and human. Thence indeed we may learn to see, as St. Peter and the other Apostles learnt to see, and as many since have testified, that the Son of Man is indeed the Son of God, and learn the same *blessedness* which they experienced. But we will not begin with pretending a knowledge we do not possess, or with any other source of knowledge than that which God has given to all His children, the power of recognizing Truth and Goodness, and the no less divine impulse to yield free homage to Truth and Goodness when it reveals itself to us. Besides this, if we are to attempt ever so rude an outline of the impression which the words and deeds of Jesus leave upon those who experience them, we cannot



dispense altogether with another gift, the gift of imagination and the power to transport ourselves into other scenes and circumstances, though this we must scrupulously restrain within the limits of possible experience. And if any one should be tempted to complain that at this time of day it is a needless if not a perilous step to descend even for a moment to this humble platform, we may suggest that even for them it may not be altogether unprofitable to read afresh the old story, and that the highest truths of religion resemble in this respect the scenery of a mountainous country, which often reveals itself in juster and nobler proportions to the traveller who toils up the valley below, than to those who dwell in habitual proximity to the frozen summits.

## I.

Joining ourselves then to the first band of disciples who followed Jesus from village to village and shore to shore of Galilee, we cannot help feeling with them the attraction of a presence unique in its freshness and power. In Him they recognized, and we still recognize, beneath the humblest garb and circumstance, a realization and specimen of Humanity distinctly above us,—something higher, something more perfect than had ever been described or conceived of before—a perfection felt at last to be so absolute that His followers freely conceded His right to that prophetic title which He claimed, “The Son of Man.” What was more in this singular goodness, they observed in others and experienced in themselves a strange power both to attract and to repel. The men and women whom He came across felt that they were in the presence of One who was always drawing out and appealing to their true and better self, suppressing and shaming into obscurity what they would fain see suppressed in themselves. Before Him every power of evil, whether without

or within, seemed to quail. The utterly bad indeed—men who had said within their hearts, “Evil be thou my good! Selfwill my God!” were seized with a mad hatred, which prompted them at last to persecute and destroy. But those who were but weak and sin-bound felt marvellously drawn towards Him in spite of their sins and weakness; men often flung themselves at His feet with such cries as these, “Thou “Son of David, have mercy upon me!” “Lord, if Thou “wilt, Thou canst make me clean!” “Speak the word only, “and my servant shall be whole!” Nor, as far as we can learn, did such confidence ever prove misplaced, or such entreaties uttered in vain. In every case the sufferers were, so to speak, taken by the hand; they were encouraged and helped forward with words which I daresay we all remember as having helped and encouraged ourselves:—“I will! be “thou clean!” “Be of good cheer! Thy sins are forgiven thee!” “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” and the like.

Nor was it only upon the victims of mental disease and morbid possession that His holy influence produced such marked effects. We cannot overlook the abundant evidence of eye-witnesses which goes to show that His touch and blessing often infused a new force of will and vigour in cases of bodily infirmities. Palsied men took up their bed and walked; sick persons who had been given up as dead revived; it was the same with the dumb, the deaf, and the blind, in whom some fresh effort of will and faith which He inspired, availed to break through the film of darkened eyes, to open ears which had long been fast, and to loosen the strings of speech. Some such foundation there must have at least been for the general verdict of His countrymen, “He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf “to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

Wonderful too it was how under the calm radiance of His goodness, under 'the confidence which reason gives,' and the guidance of His wisdom, Nature herself seemed to soften her aspect, and lend herself more readily to the needs of man. Or was it His own brave and trustful self-possession which communicated itself to His disciples so that wave and tempest ceased to alarm them, until with Him in their boat they felt as secure as if they were walking on the land? Nay, even in their own handicraft of fishing it became a matter of common observation, that when their nets were cast under His direction, they never failed to enclose a multitude of fishes.

In their social relations again His influence upon men was characterized by the same marks of benignity and power. We have an example of this in the oft repeated accounts of feeding the multitudes, in which it would seem as if an eagerness to find the miraculous has almost blinded interpreters to their ethical significance. It often happened that large crowds of hearers would follow Him into the sequestered country east of Jordan, and there remain with Him for days together, fascinated by the fresh and gracious message which seemed to change the whole outlook of their lives. On such occasions, instead of leaving them to satisfy their hunger each out of his own wallet, He would bid them bring what they had to him; and making them sit down in some grassy dell, He would lift His eyes to heaven, and having blest their homely provision of bread and dried fish in the name of the Father above, would distribute it among all in a common meal. And then it was indeed wonderful to see how the scanty store of food seemed to multiply in His hand; so that, instead of some few being full and the rest hungry, all had enough and to spare. Thus would He teach them the lesson, which alas! the world has still to learn, that

if it were not for the greedy and selfish isolation in which men try (and for the most part try in vain) to enjoy the good things of this life, there would be abundance even here in the wilderness to satisfy the just needs of all. Not that He ever uttered one word to countenance anything like a mechanical or forcible redistribution of property by legislation or by any other means, save by infusing into the hearts of mankind His own Divine Spirit of Love; and when, on a certain occasion, the request was made to Him by one of the company, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me," He replied with the characteristic rebuke, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" and turning round to them all He added those memorable words, "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance that he possesseth."

But what I think must have struck them even more than His unearthly elevation and goodness, was the unselfish love and interest which was ever ready to put itself in their place and to share their sufferings. It always seems to me that *condescension* is just the word which does not apply to the demeanour of Jesus Christ. Condescension, of course, from the *à priori* point of view it was: if it were possible for us to transport ourselves to the courts of heaven, and thence to contemplate His life upon earth, condescension, infinite condescension, it might indeed appear. But as we agreed not to aspire to any such survey, and looking at Jesus as He must have actually appeared to men like ourselves, I say that all that assertion of superiority which goes with condescension was conspicuous by its absence; and perfect goodness touched men then, as it touches us now, by the completeness of its sympathy:—"Himself took our sicknesses upon Him and bare our infirmities."

## II.

In the next place, and when hearts had been prepared by what the eye had seen and by what (to borrow the phrase of an Apostle) their hands had felt and handled, it was not difficult for them, nor should it be difficult for us, to believe what their ears heard from the Word of Life. And here it seems clear that the first thing which struck them and compelled their attention was this, that He spake as one having authority to speak. He was neither like some self-constituted master, laying down His own views and opinions, nor yet like one of the servile scribes doling out those minute decisions and interpretations, with which generations of Rabbis had embroidered the Mosaic Law. He, on the contrary, had a message to deliver, and a very simple one it was. Having in His own person and by His life awakened His followers to a new and convincing ideal of goodness—having brought it beneath their very eyes and their actual experience, He bade them look upwards to One who was not only the Creator and Father of all things, but also the very source and essence of that Goodness which He was revealing to them. He expressly disclaimed the notion that He had evolved or originated His own work and character. He had not come “to do His own will,” but to do and to exhibit what the real will and character of the Father was; nay, He went even further, and in language which from any other lips would long ago have been condemned as heterodox, declared “The Son *can* do nothing by Himself but what He seeth the Father do.” From this, if true, it followed that if men really desired the highest of all knowledge to know the will and purpose and nature of God, if they desire to learn the key to the world’s history and their own lives, they had but to look to Himself: “I,” He declared, “*am the Way, the Truth,*

“*and the Life.*” In Him they might see and hear what kings and prophets had in vain desired to learn ; in Him and Him alone they might know all that ever could be known by human intellect about God ; for in Him (so He declared) Man and God were one ; the Son of Man was also the Son of God ! All other pretended knowledge of God, whether spun from out of our own mocking reason, or concocted out of the dim and partial guesses at His Nature embodied in the Old Testament Scriptures—all compared with this is illusory. To trifle with such pretence of knowledge at all, much more to interpret Christ’s life and character in its light, must therefore be an act of disloyalty to Him. For faith in Him meant then, as it means now, that He alone is the promised One and that we look for no other. When tempted by scholastic teachers to reverse this method, to supplement and interpret the revelation of Jesus by the dicta of theology, or even of the Scriptures themselves, the answer of true faith is ever the same : “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou, and “ Thou alone, hast words of Eternal Life ! ” That this was Christ’s own claim and contention, though through so many ages the Church has ignored it, is sufficiently clear from that episode in the upper chamber when Philip, with the restless craving to get behind experience and to know what by its very nature cannot be known, put forward the request, “ Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us ; ” and He replied in tones of reproachful love, “ Have I been so long “ time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip ? “ He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father : how sayest “ thou then, Shew us the Father ? ”

In a word, He taught what St. Paul later on asserted in more technical language, that “ in Him dwelleth all the fulness “ of the Godhead in bodily form,” i.e. that He was and must ever remain all that can be known of God by mortal man.

In this way men were led from the Human to the Divine, from experiences which evoked their best and highest human sympathies to revelations which they were compelled to own as "from above." For unless they were prepared to give the lie to their own reason and conscience, to their own convictions of what was true and good,—unless they could attribute a false and presumptuous boast to One whom they had learnt to trust and to adore, they had no choice but to believe that in Jesus Christ, conscious Godhead was speaking and acting and expressing Himself to their hearts and sight and hearing. Peter was speaking for them all, when he exclaimed, "We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, "the Son of the living God."

This it was which made, and still can make, the hearer of the Gospel so highly blest. To escape from all the doubts and conflicting testimony as to the will and character of God, to attain finality and certainty on this momentous subject, to know that God is neither reckless despot dwelling in some distant Heaven with no thought or interest in man, nor the mere embodiment of such patriarchal virtues as flourished in the time of Abraham or the judges, no nor yet the Rabbinical pedant of later days; but that the utmost such men as the psalmists and Isaiahs had ventured to hope was true, that God was a Being of infinite love and compassion, even such as was then going in and out among them, not repelling them in proud aloofness, but ever drawing them near to raise them and to bless—all this was indeed joyous news. And joy too it was to know that God was even then in the world not to exact tribute or punishment from His creatures, not to expose or impute their trespasses to them, but to reconcile the world unto Himself.

---

Dear people, in the brief space that remains to us, it

behoves me to remind you that when we speak of the blessing which Jesus shed upon the world, we are not speaking of something which is past and gone, but of a blessing which may still be yours and mine, even (as I hope I have shewn) though we approach the Gospel story in the attitude of the sceptic. Though it is not ours to dwell with the Saviour in the villages of Galilee, to follow Him into those sequestered hills listening while He unfolded new rules of life and hopes of a diviner destiny for man, or to share in that frugal meal upon the grassy slope; though it is not ours to join the favoured band in the upper chamber to whom He opened up His inmost heart, there is nevertheless the same blessing even for us who come so long after to claim it. For the radiance of that Divine Presence has not departed from the earth. The promise He made ere He passed into the Heavens has been fulfilled, and wherever two or three have been united in His Name,—in every Society of believers, however humble and obscure, there has He been in their midst. Worldly men have tried to manipulate this promise for their own ambitious schemes by limiting its fulfilment to particular organizations and Churches. But the Word of God will not be so bound. Now, as through all the centuries that have passed, His power to leaven and transform human nature makes itself everywhere felt, and His spirit everywhere communicates itself and bears witness to the divine destiny of man—that we are the sons of God. It is thus that we have all been brought into that presence to see and hear what alone can bring the richest blessing of peace and Love to our souls. Christ and the Christ-life are still in us and in every Christian community, the blessed ‘Hope of Glory.’ To us who have but seen by faith He still is precious; and as we learn more of what Jesus did and said as true Son of Man, as we are



drawn more to follow the blessed steps of that Holy life,— then we are led also to see and believe all He revealed of our Father in Heaven, and to trust His Word when He tells us that He and the Father are One in the unity of the same Holy Spirit of Love. And lest the memory of His words and deeds should not suffice for sluggish heart, He has bidden us to gather round the Table which He first spread, and there to share the broken loaf which tells us that we being many are one Body in Him, and how having loved His own, He loved and still will love them unto the end. There at least the Christ-life still burns brightly upon our souls; there we may all believe and know for ourselves that the Son of God has indeed lived and spoken upon earth, yea, has died and risen again for us, and ever lives to bestow the same Blessing on all who have eyes to see and ears to hear the things which belong unto their peace!



*Other Sermons by the same.*

(Price 6*d.* each, except No. 8.)

1. **No Continuing City** : A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free** ; A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only'** considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**
6. **The Tale-bearer and his more noxious Congeners.** A Sermon for Lent.
7. **Stewards of the Mysteries.** A Sermon for Ember-tide.
8. **The Wise-Woman of Tekoah.** A Plea for Comprehension. 1*s.*
9. **A Hope full of Immortality.** A Funeral Sermon on Professor F. Max-Müller.

OXFORD AND LONDON : JAMES PARKER AND CO.

10  
*De Doctâ Ignorantiâ.*

---

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

*ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1904,*

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE;  
SOMETIME VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD.

---

James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;

AND 31 BEDFORD-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1904.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

THOSE who heard this sermon may fairly have criticized the frequency with which I use the somewhat barbarous compound 'value-judgements.' My excuse must be that if the word stands for a psychological fact not recognized, or not generally recognized, in current speech, and if that psychological fact is as important in its bearing upon religious questions as I have maintained, then at whatever cost of taste and style it ought to be transplanted from the lecture-room to the pulpit.

Without wishing to refer more directly to contemporary controversy and a recent case of episcopal intolerance, I should like to point out that the position which I have endeavoured to establish in this sermon<sup>a</sup> may be helpful to some in solving the question of clerical subscription. For clerical subscription is presumably a matter of religious belief; and religious belief is relative, not to the letter—to the dogmatic or even the quasi-historical statement, but to the underlying conviction or 'value-judgement.' If, therefore, a man feels that he accepts the latter he has a right to say, and indeed ought to say, that he believes the Article for what it professes to be, an Article of Faith, and no man, whether Bishop or Lay-pope, has any right to worry him concerning the 'jots and tittles' of the traditional letter in which that faith has reached us.

H. J. B.

*St. Simon and St. Jude's Day, 1904.*

<sup>a</sup> See especially p. 20.

## De Doctâ Ignorantiâ.

---

JOHN xviii. 37, 38.

*“ Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.”*

VARIOUS explanations have been put forward respecting the precise meaning and motive of Pilate's celebrated question. Perhaps the most natural is to suppose that Pilate was simply dealing with the charge before him, with Christ's claim to a Kingship which might be in rivalry with Cæsar's; and when upon examination he could elicit nothing more than that this Kingdom was in some way or other identical with the Truth, or the true end of man, Pilate brushed the charge aside with a question which was tantamount to a refusal to take into serious consideration any such distant ideals. What is Truth? If that were all the Kingdom claimed, with no armies to fear and no revenues to collect, the whole charge might be dismissed as frivolous. “I find in Him no fault at all.” For the most part, however, misled, I think, by personal bias, interpreters have been inclined rather to see in this question the indication of a cynical mind, wearied with the multitude of religions and philosophies which, as we

know, traded upon the curiosity and superstition of the age, and inclined to write down the Christ and His teaching as only one more of many current impositions.

But whatever may have been passing through Pilate's mind when he first put this question in his Judgment Hall, it has often been put since, and, unless I misread the signs of the times, is even now being put with a very different intention and from a very different background of thought. Before facing the question, 'Do we believe?' we need first to ask, 'What is belief?' Before weighing the rival claims to truth in theology or religious practice, the revolutions of modern philosophy compel us to make certain of our scales; before passing judgement on the true and false we must come to an understanding as to the meaning of Truth itself:—what is the true, what is real?

It is not, indeed, for the first time in the history of Christianity that the question has forced itself upon those who would be sincere and honest in the professions of their Faith. In the fifteenth century, when the new birth in literature and art was dawning in the skies, the Roman Cardinal, Nicolas of Cues, was provoked to question, and question fundamentally, the validity of the doctrinal teaching of his day. He saw that what occupied theologians was only the traditions and formulas received or laid down by authority; that to be able to discourse and argue in accordance with these positive standards was what passed for theological science; and all the time he goes on to say these teachers are destitute of the highest knowledge, which is the knowledge of their own ignorance, and that they know not that inaccessible Light in which is no darkness at all<sup>a</sup>. But

<sup>a</sup> Apol. Doct. Ignor., fol. 34, p. 2. "Versantur enim pene omnes qui ad theologiæ studium se conferunt, circa positivas quasdam tra-

although, like another Socrates, he saw the futility and unreality of what passed for knowledge and was everywhere received as theological truth, the remedy which he indicated was either the merely passive recognition of ultimate ignorance, or a mysticism clothed in a terminology almost as barbarous as that of the teachers against whom he declaimed. He saw, and saw truly, that the mere weaving together of texts or the dicta of philosophers, the building up of systems either by deduction or by reference to what in their wisdom they thought necessary for the majesty of God or the salvation of mankind :—he saw, I say, that no such process could take the place of that immediate element in religious life and knowledge which we call Faith or Intuition, and which he contrasts as the vision of the mind with the hearing of the ear; but towards giving any intelligible account of this intellectual vision, or bringing it into relation with other facts of experience, he does little or nothing. When we attempt to examine the revelations of his intellectual vision we only recognize fragments of that Neo-Platonism which had been working like leaven in mediæval thought ever since Scotus Erigena translated the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius, and which the Cardinal had probably imbibed from the Brethren of the Common Life in his school-days at Deventer.

Although, therefore, Nicolas Cusanus may be said in some degree to have anticipated the impatience which the modern spirit feels at the empty claims to Truth of ecclesiastical dogma, still we require something more than his vague

*ditiones et earum formas, et tunc se putant theologos esse, quando sic sciunt loqui, ut alii, quos sibi constituerunt auctores; et non habent scientiam ignorantiae lucis illius inaccessibleis, in quo non sunt tenebrae. Sed qui per doctam ignorantiam de auditu ad visum mentis transferuntur, ii certiori experimento scientiam ignorantiae se gaudent attingisse."*

rhapsodies about mystic vision and the illuminating Light of God. Whilst we have learnt the real ignorance which lurks behind theological systems,—whilst we have, perhaps, learnt further that the highest knowledge brings with it an entire reversal of old pretensions to know,—we still must ask what justification there is for the faith that is in us? In what sense may we still say that the things we believe are real? In what relation do the judgements in which we express our Faith stand to those of Science and Morals?

When we try to face such questions, we are met at once with the difficulty which is found even outside the sphere of Religion in answering the question, What is Truth? and in determining the precise criterion by which to distinguish Reality from Appearance. It has long been agreed that the first and natural reference to an outward or objective order of existence, though sufficing for practical purposes, affords no solution to the speculative question, because that very outward or objective order is itself found upon examination to have no meaning or existence except as thought and representation. In comparing, therefore, our ideas and theories with, as we think, the outward reality, we find that after all we are only comparing one order of thoughts with another order of thoughts. And if in order to explain to ourselves and account for this reference of our thoughts to a higher standard, we conjure up the phantasm of an Absolute Mind from which all thought has sprung, and to which all Ideas are present in the completeness of their mutual relations, and then say that correspondence with the thoughts of the Absolute Mind,—that is Truth, nevertheless the criterion we have set up proves as inaccessible as ever, and still we have to conclude that nothing is attainable for us except empirical and provisional Truth.

Or yet once more, suppose that we have succeeded (as some



think that they have succeeded) in determining the characteristic Laws or Forms of Absolute Thought; and suppose us able to say, e.g., that Harmony and Consistency is the test of Reality,—from this point of view it may be said that though Absolute Truth and Reality are denied us, nevertheless we can make the very practical distinction between partial consistencies and hopeless incompatibilities; and amongst experiences we can distinguish those which are more or less completely co-ordinated, and therefore less likely to require future modification from those experiences whose co-ordination is only imperfect, and which we must therefore be prepared to see in a somewhat different light when related to a wider circle of experiences. By some such path as this we may possibly claim to have arrived at something like a logical criterion between Reality and Appearance. Yet after all the criterion is at best elastic and uncertain: it involves degrees of reality, or (which is another side of the same thing) degrees of certainty; whereas when we assert that a thing is real, a conviction certain, the psychological state is the same, whatever may be the evidence upon which our assent is given:—we are quite as certain, quite as convinced of our everyday beliefs and experiences as our scientific friends are of their electrons and monads or of any other far-reaching generalization, and, what is most vital of all, we are just as ready to act upon them.

This readiness to stand to our convictions and to act upon them brings us, I think, a little further on our way. For after all no man, not even the profoundest metaphysician, is mere intellect. He is a being who feels, and who must live and act as well as think. He has desires and hopes as well as intellectual convictions. He is not Mind only,—either absolute or relative; He is Will and Person; and what is true and real for man must have reference to

man as a living Will. The pursuit of an abstract and absolute criterion between the true and false turned out to be futile; but on this less ambitious path it may be possible to find at least some workable theory which will apply not only to outward experiences, but also to those which are inward and spiritual.

If we are content then to contemplate the quest of knowledge as only a particular though highly organized manifestation of the will to live, we may expect throughout its whole course analogies to other forms of life. The living thing whatever and wherever it is, is always pushing outward with efforts in this direction and that, trying to assimilate as nourishment whatever comes in its way; and those movements which bring ease and pleasure are repeated into permanence, those foods which do the same are again devoured; whilst any effort or any food which bring pain or dissatisfaction are avoided. So it well may be with the operations of the intellect. Generalizations grow up and rules of action are based upon them, to which different values are attached corresponding to their scope and efficacy; and those which are most far-reaching, those which enable us to co-ordinate most extensively the powers at our command are necessarily regarded as the higher and more valuable truths. But above and beyond these determining influences, we can never forget that we are social beings dependent upon one another for any progress in life, and for all that makes life most precious. Those conclusions therefore from experience which we find our fellow-men sharing with us, which afford a basis for discussion and common action, to which we can confidently appeal, acquire an altogether distinctive value from such convictions as are limited to the individual. The former we have come to term objective; we are not ashamed to parade them and fling them down before the world; whilst the latter

we either keep to ourselves or communicate tentatively and with all reserve.

From this point of view, whatever may be the real or ultimate constitution of the Universe as known to a supposed Absolute Intellect, the real for us and the true for us is that which has value for life and progress ; that which enables us to co-ordinate and utilize our experience ; that above all which we share and discuss with our fellow-men, sharpening our wits, extending our experience, increasing and heightening our activities by co-operation.

If this rough sketch represents the account to be given of what we mean by Truth and Reality in our knowledge of the Outer World, if so-called theoretical judgements must upon examination be resolved into judgements of value, and Reality be in every case relative to Purpose, it surely applies with more obvious cogency to those judgements with reference to conduct, and above all to what we believe concerning ourselves and our relations as spiritual beings to a supreme Spiritual Power and Spiritual Destiny.

Passing over the question of our ethical judgements, and coming at once to those beliefs and feelings which we distinguish as religious, we scarcely need an Apostle to remind us that the first and fundamental judgement upon which all religious life, all religious conviction must rest, asserts that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him ;— in other words, we must not only believe in the abstract existence of Deity, but also that in some way or other our happiness and well-being is dependent upon our relations towards Him. The existence and reality of God cannot be placed upon the same plane as the reality of those permanent possibilities of sensation which we call the world of Nature. The reality of the latter consists in a conviction forced upon

us by the daily cravings and necessities of our bodily life ; but the idea of God neither carries with it (as Anselm pretended) the necessary idea of His existence, nor yet for natural Science or for the purposes of that physical existence to which Science owes its origin, and to which it still ministers, is the existence of God a necessary hypothesis at all. It is only when Science begins to reflect upon itself, when the Spirit, the inner consciousness, makes its wants known, only when we ask for a ground for that order and a fulfilment of that order which we have in part and piecemeal discovered, when finally we demand in Nature and History a unity and purpose analogous to the unity and purpose with which we strive to order our own lives,—then it is (at least in logical order) that in some form or another the Idea of God shapes itself as of a Real Being with whom we cannot dispense without losing grasp of our own reality, without forfeiting all belief, all hope of fulfilling any rational conception of our own end. To assert therefore that God exists is to assert that we cannot afford to make such a sacrifice, that it is intolerable that our highest ideals should be deemed for ever incapable of verification ; it is to assert that the world is not worth knowing, that knowing is not knowledge, if the world is not a world of order and of moral purpose. It is to assert that life would not be worth living if it were only to remain an unfinished patchwork of disconnected moments, and lastly, it is to assert that it is worth our while, nay that it is worth all our while and all our efforts to follow after this Ideal of Righteousness,—of Unity and Order in existence. In this way ‘the Will to live’ has grown into ‘the Will to believe,’ and Belief in God is found to be a judgement as to the value of the world and of our life in the world ; it expresses the conclusion that no estimate of ourselves or of our purpose in living can be satisfactory which does not

take Him into account, and above all that to seek Him and to set His Will before us is its own reward.

Although, however, this account may have some pretensions to represent the way in which the reflecting mind of to-day may regard and justify its belief in the existence and reality of God, it has at first sight little or no correspondence with the primitive forms of religion through which the human race has passed, and which still prevail among savage tribes. And yet if the fundamental or generative moment in our idea of God be the craving after Moral Order in the Universe and in life both social and individual, it is only what might be expected if primitive men found for themselves a symbol and first realization of that Moral Order in patriarchal authority, or essayed to gratify that craving in ancestor-worship. For after all I suppose that patriarchal authority was the first form of moral authority, and family life, however rudely organized, was one of the first forms in which moral order was attempted; and if, with the development of war and conquest, servitude and cruel butchery became associated with the idea of supreme power, we must not be surprised to find many savage rites among the multifarious variety of worship which link us up with the past, or that such personifications of cruelty as the Juju still enjoy a moral value in savage lands. We are not, however, pretending to deal with the historical development of religion; and so much has been said only by way of illustrating our general position that even among the most backward forms of religion, it is the recognition of its moral value for human life which generates and constitutes belief in the existence of a God, a value to which practical testimony has been given by the zeal with which men served their Deities, by their confidence in ultimate reward, and by the unceasing, though for the most part in-

coherent forms in which all races of mankind have gone on feeling after God if haply they might find Him.

This brings us at once to the question of all questions, viz., on what ground can we maintain that in Jesus Christ mankind have found their God? that Christianity is the Universal and Final Religion? or rather what is the meaning and nature of the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God? And to this our reply must be that just as there was no theoretical proof of God's existence at all, but only our own deep craving to justify our belief in a Moral Order,—neither can there be any formal proof of the Divinity of Christ. If the belief in God's existence is a value-judgement, so also must the assertion that Jesus is His Son or realized Idea be a value-judgement. In other words it is essentially an act of Faith, and expresses the immediate apprehension of what He is to us, of His power to deliver, to satisfy, and to raise. For though we may have previously formed the value-judgement that God exists, it is not as if we thereby became possessed of any clear conception of *what* He is, of His distinguishing marks and attributes, so as to be able to pronounce theoretically upon the claims of any Being revealed to our experience, and to say whether He were God or no. On the contrary, Christ Himself is, and claimed to be, the one and only revelation of *what* God is to those who receive Him. Like some new and illuminating conception in science which makes the student of Nature reconsider and modify his old formulæ,—in the same way the appearance of Christ upon earth superseded and in some cases utterly falsified all previous conceptions of Deity, so that even the anticipations of the old Covenant had to be abandoned as partial and unworthy. To those, therefore, who share in the discovery, to

those who have seen the Lord, whether face to face, or as in our own case through the medium of others' lives and testimony, He must ever be a fresh starting-point for all reasonings, a final criterion to which we must bring all assertions concerning the Divine will and character. And lastly, we must know Him as we must know every other first principle and every other new phenomenon, *immediately*,—just because He has appeared, just because He has shown Himself to us, shown Himself once on the stage of History, shows Himself still to faithful hearts.

Our last phrase may sound, perhaps, only like a conventional pulpit flourish. To our position, however, it is essential, and expresses the necessary condition of any true knowledge of Christ. For to know Christ as the Son of God, our realized idea of perfection, and to own Him as Lord of our soul's allegiance, although it must be an act of immediate apprehension whenever it does come, nevertheless it cannot come without antecedent preparation and except under certain spiritual conditions. It was after months of living intercourse that St. Peter owned Him the Christ, the Son of the Living God; it was after a yet longer experience and with all the evidence of the Passion to kindle his love and loyalty that Thomas fell down and uttered that best yet briefest of creeds, 'My Lord and my God'; and what living intercourse effected for His first followers, that the presence of His Spirit has ever since effected for successive generations. 'No man can call Jesus the Lord,' says the Apostle, 'except by the Holy Ghost'; and if we ask for the conditions of that presence, for the conditions necessary to bring about the conviction that it is indeed the Father's Love which is revealed to us in His Son, we point at once to the promise and to the fact, 'where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.'

It is in the Christian Community, in any and every company of believers united in the love of Christ, that these conditions are to be found, and that the individuals of successive generations have been enabled to believe with their hearts and with their lips to confess that Jesus is 'made to them both Lord and Christ.'

In this respect, then, there is a strict analogy between the conditions of religious Faith and secular knowledge. In secular knowledge not only are we dependent upon teachers for the accumulated experience of the past, but as we have ventured to argue, one constituent in the conviction of reality is that we share the experience with others, that it has become established by discussion, and is something to which we can appeal. In the same way it is only in Christian fellowship, only in the company of believers united for the purposes of the spiritual life, that the Presence of Christ is felt, that faith is quickened, and that men know themselves and see themselves as spiritual beings united in their allegiance to their true Lord and God.

But, however and by whomsoever the confession is made, whether it comes from the lips of Apostles or Doctors, or out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, what we must insist upon is that when the Believer says, 'Jesus is the Son of God,' this is no ontological proposition concerning some problematical existence beyond the range of human experience, but is the assertion of what Jesus is to us, of the relation in which He stands to our personal needs, ideals, hopes: it indicates the place which He holds in our affections, the value which we put upon His character, His work, and the message which He brought to the world. And that message in turn, the Truth to which He bore witness both in His life and death, was not a Truth about any abstract existence; but of what God was to us, of the value of the



Human Soul, of the possibility of our redemption and justification, and of the kingdom which He brought within our reach over the powers of the world.

Now of all we have been urging it might be said that the question after all is purely a logical one; that even if we admit all Truth as we seek it and speak of it to be relative to our own faculties, to our will and life-purpose, nevertheless, this need not affect either our pursuit of knowledge or our conduct of life. Whether this is the case with the natural Sciences or Speculative Knowledge I will not stay to discuss; but in the outward expression of our spiritual convictions and in the pursuit of our inward life, it must make all the difference in the world whether these Truths and Convictions which we justly regard as fundamental are Truths of unrelated existence beyond our power to verify and explain, or whether they are the outward form in which past generations of believers have unconsciously disguised their own inward experiences; whether in more technical language these theological propositions in which we state our spiritual beliefs are ontological judgements or judgements of value, judgements, i.e., in which are expressed our estimate of certain conceptions, of certain historical facts and persons, and of their relation to ourselves and our lives.

(1) The great theologian of the last century, whose views we have been substantially though not altogether servilely reproducing, insisted in the first place upon the advantage gained by banishing metaphysics altogether from religious teaching. It might, indeed, be said that the very elimination of metaphysics was itself the result of a metaphysical discussion, proving that however we may struggle we cannot escape its toils; but this is not quite a fair statement of the case. Such a prolegomenon to Religion is not, strictly speaking,

of a metaphysical but of a transcendental or critical character, and its conclusion is that the whole line of dogmatic Theology is doubly illegitimate, by first hypostatizing subjective notions and then pretending to discuss these as existing independently of human thought and will; and the lasting service rendered by Ritschl to Christianity, a service which may be said to complete the work of Luther, is that he has drawn attention to what now appears to many a sufficiently obvious truth, viz.: that the whole body of dogmatic Theology, — the Doctrine of the Incarnation, of the two Natures, of the Eternal Trinity—as well as that of the Atonement and Redemption of Mankind, is of this character. He would not say, and we certainly should not say, that these doctrines were either true or false, much less that they were illusions or deliberate inventions. In the first instance, at any rate, they were rather the natural and spontaneous form in which devout believers of the age expressed their religious convictions, the relative estimate which they formed of God and Christ, and of the work of Christ's Spirit in their own souls; whilst later generations insisted upon these statements as possessing an intrinsic value, and employed all the devices of an ingenious dialectic to build them up into elaborate systems of Theology. What we need then for our own spiritual help,—what every age needs, what every earnest Christian needs.—is to unearth the original spiritual convictions, the value-judgements which lie crushed beneath these loads of pedantry; then and not till then can we say whether we still believe (as I for one hold that we do), or whether the Christian faith is among the things which are waxing old and ready to vanish away. On the other hand, to insist upon old theological dogmas as articles of faith, to exalt them into a subject of study for their own sake (as is done in clerical seminaries), is nothing else than a sinful anach-

ronism, of which the disastrous consequences are neither distant nor difficult to discern.

Among such disastrous consequences, none perhaps is more disastrous and more prejudicial to the cause of true religion, than the distinction which is drawn, and sometimes, we fear, deliberately insisted upon, between Theological Science (as it is falsely called) and those religious convictions and experiences in which the lay believer may share. How often do we hear and read of the special training required to appreciate theological questions, of the incapacity of the ordinary lay mind to judge of them! what valuable time and effort is wasted by our students and young men preparing for Orders in transporting themselves into this sphere of unreality and make-believe, in acquiring that professional habit of mind, those tricks of speech and manner, which seem to remove them from the pale of common sense and common sympathies! It is this tendency, this studied policy (as I fear it must be regarded in some quarters), which is secretly undermining the faith and religious interest of the present generation, who are being taught that the duty of laymen is to yield a submission, sometimes earnest, sometimes perfunctory, to the clergy, 'who understand these things, you know.' Our message then to the Church is the old message of Nicolas Cusanus: "*Docta Ignorantia est vera Scientia.*" Let our clergy pursue if they will their studies in dogmatic Theology, but let them begin by learning that all this pretence of knowledge only conceals real ignorance; let them try to seek out the original convictions which gave rise to those doctrines; let them, in a word, be taught to see that Christian Truth must be limited to Christian experience, experience which it is open to every believer to understand and appreciate, and in some measure at least to feel and know for himself. Then they will see for themselves that Christian

•

teaching must consist, not in the inculcation of Dogmas to be received on authority (as if this were saving Faith!), nor yet in that pretence of dialectic with which it is possible to give these doctrines a veneer of reasoned proof,—but in setting forth and bringing home to our hearers those intuitions and value-judgements which originally gave rise to the dogma; or, to employ a phrase once familiar but now unfortunately well-nigh forgotten, our “preaching must be experimental;” we must speak and argue and testify what we have felt, we must appeal to a common experience as brother believers, and not pretend to speak, as the priests and hierophants of cryptic mysteries.

(2.) In the next place, if a settlement of the prior question concerning the nature of theological truth opens the way to a more profitable study of Christian Doctrine and a more excellent method of religious instruction, it is no less helpful in directing our study of the New Testament Scripture. Christianity is indeed founded upon certain events in the past. The Person of the Founder was once a phenomenon submitted to the outward senses of His contemporaries on earth. It was the actual words He spoke, the deeds He wrought, the sufferings He endured, which were the generating cause of the spiritual convictions which we have noted, and in which we share. Moreover, it is to the record of these words and deeds that we still appeal for instruction and argument, and upon which we largely depend for spiritual growth and patience and comfort. Nevertheless upon closer inspection, the events and their record fail to afford that clear and impregnable basis for our faith which some have maintained. Something indeed must have happened:—a personality must have manifested itself in such wise as to have produced the results which are a matter of History and abide with us to-day, but how is it possible to reproduce and de-

scribe what did happen? nay, can any event ever be really known as it happened? any character described or words reported as they were actually spoken? Even contemporary witnesses can give but their own impressions coloured by the medium through which they perceive and judge; and often, if not always, those that come after are better judges of the event in all its bearings and significance than those who took part in it. The fourth Evangelist showed himself alive to this aspect of the question when he recorded, among other sayings of the Christ overlooked by the Synoptists, that which promised a quickening of the disciples' memory as they felt more and more the influence of their Master's Spirit: "He shall bring all things to your remembrance." Not that this process could have stopped short with those who had been with Jesus. Not only must the authors and editors of the four Gospels themselves have exercised this power of appreciation in dealing with the Evangelical traditions; but ever since, the history of Christian teaching is just the record of successive attempts to adjust and co-ordinate the valuations of the past with the growing needs and varied experience of believers.

Thus the main problem of New Testament Criticism is made clear. Its object is not only to determine as closely as we can the residuum which can be regarded as something like the actual sayings and doings of the Lord, after allowing for the personal equation in the various channels through which the tradition has reached us,—a residuum which some (like Harnack) would reduce to very slender proportions indeed. It has a far more important and more vital task than this:—the more we believe in the reality of Christ's personality and life, the more important must it be to disentangle and set forth *the first and priceless impressions produced upon those who enjoyed an actual experience of Christ*

*in the flesh.* And having distinguished these beliefs and impressions which may with some certainty be traced to that source which we are agreed to call Divine, we shall be better able to evaluate those elements which have crept possibly into the New Testament, and certainly into Early Christian doctrine, from Pagan sources, or the development of ecclesiastical policy: so that though we may not be justified in saying of any later dogma that it is either true or false, we may be enabled to assert with some safety whether or not it is in accordance with the first beliefs traceable to the manifestation of the Son of God. And here, surely, we may claim our right to be numbered among His faithful followers, among those who believe, though we may reject some of these later developments, or may have our doubts as to the historical character of some of the narratives in which even those first convictions were clothed.

On the other hand, though we may have to conclude that even the greater part of the Evangelical record is a record of impressions or (to use the technical term) of value-judgements in the guise of narrative rather than a mirror of the actual words and deeds of Jesus, we need not, therefore, admit (as the Abbé Loisy would have us admit) that all the subsequent value-judgements of the Church have an equal claim upon our faith and reverence. If the Christ was a Real Person, an unique manifestation of the Godhead, and if we consistently stand by our estimate that He is indeed the Son of God,—then, surely (as we have already argued), we have a ruling principle and criterion to which we can bring all other claims, and by which we ought loyally to test and try all subsequent doctrines, whether individual or collective. To claim the same divine authority for subsequent developments of Church doctrine is practically to deny the unique claims of Jesus,

the completeness of His Divinity, and the finality of His Revelation ; it is, in fact, to preach another Gospel and exalt the Church into another and Diviner Christ.

(3) So far we have endeavoured, in however rough and imperfect a manner, to indicate the way in which a critique of religious knowledge, a *Docta Ignorantia* as to what we can know and cannot know, should affect our study of the New Testament, as well as our teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Christ ; but before I conclude I would further crave your indulgence in order to point out how it also seems to supply the one effective eirenicon between professed believers and those who for one reason or another remain outside the communion of the faithful. By removing our statements of Belief entirely out of the physical plane, by recognizing their inward or spiritual character as value-judgements whilst stoutly maintaining their necessity and reality to us as spiritual beings,—we completely outflank those whom the dogmatic teaching of the Churches had provoked into attacking our Religion. On the other hand, we can at least hypothetically argue that if there is such a thing as an universal need of religion, and if, human nature being what it is and the conditions of life being what they are, there is but one satisfactory fulfilment of that need—then it follows that the Religion which supplies that fulfilment is the one true or universal religion, and the propositions in which it is expressed, although they may be value-judgements, are nevertheless true value-judgements, and may even claim a right to be called by that blessed word “objective.” Admitting, as I think we must admit, that the purpose of all our knowledge, all our belief, all our actions is to live, Christians profess in the spirit and teaching of Jesus to find ‘life more abundantly,’

and therefore the Truth as it is in Jesus is the Truth for us, and, as we maintain, for all men and for all time. It is, indeed, a fact that so long as a man stiffly refuses to overstep the platform of bodily or outward experience, so long as he maintains that all inward cravings and experiences are delusions and the effects of morbid physical conditions,— he cannot and will not allow Truth or Reality to belong to any religious statement whatsoever. What St. Paul admitted in his Epistle to the Corinthians remains true to-day, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually judged.” Spiritual convictions imply spiritual education in a Christian community, as we have frankly admitted, just as the apprehension of scientific truth requires scientific training; but in neither case does it follow that such convictions are untrue just because they do not commend themselves to those who have not received the requisite training. Nay, there are not wanting indications that among the professors of Natural Science some of the most eminent recognize as fully as we do the reality of spiritual needs and the value of those beliefs and revelations which satisfy them. This is the significance of that demand which has recently made itself heard in our one independent journal of Theology for a re-statement of Christian doctrine. And the still more remarkable correspondence now proceeding in the daily press points in the same direction, and goes to show that among the ordinary run of men and women, what keeps them true to their faith in Christ, in spite of the scriptural and doctrinal difficulties in which they are often entangled, is the practical value which they have experienced of that Faith and of its power to support them in the trials and struggles of life.

Nor can I see of what other verification the Christian



Faith is capable, or how we can prove the truth and reality of those value-judgements which have perpetuated themselves ever since the appearance of Christ upon earth, except by constructing something like a *Catena Aurea*, not this time to consist of old glosses upon the letter which killeth, but of the living testimony from believers of what God and His Christ have done for their souls. If such a golden chain of testimony is not easily found, it is because the sincerest and most earnest Christians do not for the most part care to wear their heart upon their sleeve, and therefore the majority of Christian experiences upon record are apt to be those of eccentrics and fanatics. With one such testimony, however, which savours neither of eccentricity nor fanaticism, but a testimony which may well be typical of many unrecorded testimonies, and one with which most of us can in some measure sympathize, I shall conclude this long sermon. It is from Richard Baxter's "Reasons of the Christian Religion." "If "the tempter should persuade a believer (he says) to doubt "whether the Gospel be true, he may have recourse into "his soul for a testimony of it; thence he can tell the "tempter by experience that he has found the promises of "this Gospel made good to him. Christ hath there promised "to send His Spirit into the souls of His people, and so "He hath done by me; He hath promised to give light to "them that sit in darkness, and to guide their feet into the "ways of peace; to bind up the broken-hearted, and set "at liberty the captives; and all this He hath fulfilled upon "me. . . . The help which He promised in temptations, the "hearing of prayer, the relief in distress, all these I have "found performed; and therefore I know that the Gospel "is true<sup>a</sup>."

<sup>a</sup> R. Baxter, Vol. XX., p. 163.

*Other Sermons by the same.*

(Price 6*d.* each, except No. 8.)

1. **No Continuing City:** A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free;** A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only' considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.**
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**
6. **The Tale-bearer and his more noxious Congeners.** A Sermon for Lent.
7. **Stewards of the Mysteries.** A Sermon for Embertide.
8. **The Wise-Woman of Tekoah.** A Plea for Comprehension. 1*s.*
9. **A Hope full of Immortality.** A Funeral Sermon on Professor F. Max-Müller.
10. **The Blessedness of seeing and hearing the Christ.** A Sermon for Sceptics.
11. **How to believe in One Catholic and Apostolic Church.** A second Sermon for Embertide.

OXFORD AND LONDON : JAMES PARKER AND CO.

//

"How to believe in One Catholic and  
Apostolic Church."

A SECOND EMBERTIDE SERMON.

*PREACHED DEC. 21, 1902.*

BY THE

REV. H. J. BIDDER, B.D.,

VICAR OF ST. GILES', OXFORD;

FELLOW, BURSAR, AND FORMERLY TUTOR OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.



James Parker and Co.

27 BROAD-STREET, OXFORD;

AND 31 BEDFORD-STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

1903.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

Is the Christian Religion to survive? When the Christ comes again, 'will He find faith upon the earth'? Are Englishmen still to form a 'Church,' or henceforth are they to be a 'people' only? These are questions which must force themselves with more or less insistence upon thoughtful believers, when they contemplate the problem of evangelizing our teeming population at home and our growing colonies afield, or when we watch the increasing disregard of the Lord's Day, and the indifference if not the alienation of the Laity; but most painfully do such questions force themselves upon us when we turn our attention to the organization and ministry of the Church, which ought to afford the most direct and efficient safeguards. For the conclusion to which, however reluctantly, we are driven, is that the same foe which threatens political and social order in neighbouring States, is also the foe of what should be our own highest national life, viz. our Church. '*Le Clericalisme voilà l'ennemi.*' It is not the gospel of Christ which is an offence to Laymen, it is not the miraculous element in the Bible which makes them hold aloof, nor does the "Higher Criticism" stand in the way of a more consistent observance of Christian worship and practice; but the narrow purview, the absurd pretensions, the obsolete assumptions and the lack of common sense which characterize a large and increasing section of the clergy.

History convinces us that it is useless to look to ecclesias-

tical officials for progress or reform: their aim has always been limited to the protection of their own powers and prerogatives. If the control of events had been left to Bishops and clergy, there would never have been a Reformation.

Our hope then must be in the Nation itself; if faith has died out there, the Church is dead also. And that hope is that Nonconformists may lay aside all bitterness, may rise above their grievances and the narrow expedient of temporary organizations which those grievances once necessitated, and that Churchmen may rise to a truer and higher faith in *One Catholic Church*. The aim of the following Sermon is to expose the false use to which these words of our Creed are commonly put, and to indicate the higher, truer sense in which all believers can and must agree.

H. J. B.

*Ascensiontide, 1903.*

# “How to believe in One Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

---

MATT. xxviii. 19.

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

WHETHER these words were ever spoken by Christ to the outward ear, or were in part at least a subsequent revelation of His Spirit to the Apostles, we must still with all believers recognize them as the faithful expression of His Will, and as constituting indeed the very charter of His Church, our authority for still ordaining<sup>a</sup> and sending forth ministers to preach His Gospel at home and abroad. They are, however, more than this: they are also our true ground and title for believing the Church to be ‘One’ and ‘Catholic’; and in this aspect I propose to consider them this morning with special reference to what I think we must conclude to be the false and misleading sense in which this article of the Creed is often understood and applied at the present day.

To appreciate the full significance of these words, we must transport ourselves for a moment to the Church of the Old Dispensation. The old Covenant had been given in the hand of a Mediator, even as the new Covenant was proclaimed through the agency of the Apostles. It was

<sup>a</sup> Preached on the 4th Sunday in Advent.

Mosaic, not Apostolic as we term the Christian Church in which we believe ; but for our purpose it is more important to observe that instead of being Universal—instead of being offered to every nation and proclaimed to all the world, it was a privilege secured to the descendants of one man only. From this we see the first and primary meaning of the term ‘*Catholic*’ as applied to the Christian Church :—it is contrasted with Jewish, and means that the Gospel and all its privileges are for every nation under heaven, not for a single race or society.

The vision of God’s Will vouchsafed to Moses was after all but dim and imperfect. It had been annotated and written over and still further obscured by the scribblings of priests and Rabbis ; from time to time also its majesty had been reasserted and its truths illumined by the insight of gifted teachers or prophets. But even the most spiritual teaching of the prophetic schools had been like the law itself, ‘in part and piecemeal’ ‘at sundry times and in divers manners.’ For this reason their messages had no claim either to unity or finality : priest and prophet struggled like another Esau and Jacob in the womb of time ; but both alike were stamped as partial and transitory. ‘The Law,’ as the Epistle to the Hebrews states so emphatically, ‘made nothing perfect ;’ its Covenant was not faultless ; its priests and sacrifices served only as a passing shadow of heavenly things. Above all, the Law had no room for the Gentile world ; it had no breadth or catholicity :—even when the voice of the prophet was uplifted to address the Isles, or the distant lands of Ethiopia and Shinar, it was only with the limited and uncertain hope of ministering to the glories of Israel. Indeed the catholicity of the New Covenant, with its free offer alike to Jew and Gentile, was such a strange and unlooked for revelation of the Divine Will that St. Paul

always speaks of it as a 'Mystery,' i.e. as something that would never have been thought of if it had not been revealed.

In the next place the Church of Christ is Catholic because the Gospel of Christ has no alternative. As there is but one God and as in Jesus all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, it follows that there can be nothing more to come, no fresh Covenant to supersede it, no other message to the world.

And yet again the Catholicity of the Gospel seems to follow from that which is indeed its very root and essence, the Fatherhood of God, as well as from the completeness or finality of His revelation in Christ:—One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in us all. All, therefore, who own the Lord, who have been admitted into the Christian Covenant and made children of the One Heavenly Father, are members of the One Catholic Church, or (to translate these words into yet plainer English) they all belong to one and the same Universal Calling.

But it was not many centuries before a very different use of the term Catholic sprang up among believers, a use or misuse of the term which still bears its poisonous fruit among the Churches at the present day. When the Gospel after gradually making its way among the humbler and scattered Communities of Asia Minor, and Macedonia, Greece and Italy, became at length accepted by the ruling race of the world, it changed almost insensibly both its outward and inward character. The imperial instinct of Rome asserted itself within the Church of God: the imperial organization reproduced itself in its Hierarchy. Bishops from being the overseers, perhaps only the finan-



cial administrators of the Local Presbyteries in each town, soon assumed magisterial functions. They became the counterparts of the Pro-consuls or Lord-lieutenants of the Roman provinces, and it was inevitable that in due course the Bishop of Rome should become the counterpart of the Emperor himself. Creeds and prayers and ritual, the Discipline both of Clergy and Laity—all were brought under an uniform and organized system. Those who stood out were denounced as heretics, whilst those who obeyed secured alike the temporal privileges of the Church and the assurance of final salvation hereafter. The Roman Church claimed, as the Emperor had claimed, universal dominion, and this is the sense in which she has persistently usurped the title of 'Catholic.' Ask her if this or that teaching, practice, ritual is Catholic or not; and she will answer, not by referring to the nature and requirements of the Gospel, or of the Christian Vocation, but only by reference to her own use and prescription. So that in her lips the word Catholic has all but reversed its meaning; and instead of expressing (*connoting* as Logicians say) the essential and intrinsic scope of the Gospel as God's message of Salvation to all mankind, it became a term of extension, *denoting* a particular organization, a particular hierarchy, and the code of doctrine and ritual prescribed by its authority. And corresponding to this, was the change of meaning which insensibly crept into the Creed: as fixed by the Council of Nicæa, it ran, as you know, thus:—"I believe in One Catholic and Apostolic Church, i.e., in One Universal Church to which all believers belong;" whilst in the Western (erroneously styled the Apostles') Creed, the assertion of the Church's unity is omitted, and we read, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," words which have come to be understood as indicating one amongst several competing Churches.

Now at the Reformation the old Creeds were retained not merely because they possessed a certain external authority and antiquity, but upon their own merits as faithful summaries of Apostolic teaching. All that the Reformers had to do was to reassert the true and original meaning of belief in the Catholic Church, as against the Roman gloss only too easily read, as we have seen, into the later form. This they did both in her daily prayers, and in the Communion Office. In the prayer 'for the Church militant here on Earth,' in which we ask God Almighty to 'inspire the Universal Church with the Spirit of Truth, Unity and Concord,' the words which follow show at once what is meant by the Universal or Catholic Church, viz.—'*all who confess Thy Holy Name;*' similarly, when in the Prayer for all Sorts and Conditions of Men, we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church, this is in the next clause defined as meaning '*all who profess and call themselves Christians.*'

The mere retention, however, of the word 'Catholic' in our Prayer-Books supplies the modern Anglican with a catch-penny argument for introducing Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. Children at school, and childish persons out of school, are taught to call themselves Catholics, and that the English Church is Catholic, both of which assertions are, strictly speaking, nonsensical; and then in due course they are urged to conform to certain practices and to worship with certain rites because these are 'Catholic' in that false and bastard use of the word which we have indicated. Any one, you would think, possessed of average intelligence, would be able to lay their finger at once upon this fallacious ambiguity, and answer that just because they believed in One Catholic Church as the growth of one Catholic Gospel for all mankind, they repudiated any system,—any pretence

of an exclusive Salvation such as the Church of Rome claims for herself, and in which our High Anglicans would like to share. But it is our misfortune at the present day that so many who ought to know better have been caught in the eddies of that backwater which is known as the Oxford Movement; and this very Embertide how many of the young men who will be ordained from clerical seminaries will descend upon our town and country parishes, not with the good news of Salvation full and free for all men in the name of Jesus, but to assert the privileges secured to the 'Catholic Church' and the prerogatives of their own office! While this view of the Church and ministry prevails it is no wonder that the number of those who offer themselves for Ordination dwindles from year to year; and dwindle it will until English Churchmen awake from these false, these cramping, these sectarian theories of the Church, which are at once an insult to the Redeemer and an offence to the conscience of sincere believers,—until, instead, they rise to a nobler and worthier belief in the Catholic Church throughout all the world, and all the ages.

In conclusion, then, let me put before you in simplest language what it really is to believe in One Catholic and Apostolic Church. For this purpose I cannot do better than recall the words of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. 'The promise,' he said, addressing the Jews and Proselytes, the promise, i.e. of Remission and the Gift of the Holy Ghost, 'is not only unto you and your children, but also to all that are afar off, even *as many as the Lord our God shall call.*' The word "Church" signifies the assembly of the Called, and the Catholic Church signifies 'all whom God shall call.' When, therefore, I say that 'I believe in One Catholic Church,' I mean that there is only one Gospel, one Salvation, one and the same Call from

the same Saviour to all mankind, and that it is not for me to excommunicate or brand as schismatics any whom the Lord our God has been pleased to call with His Gospel of Salvation. Therefore though Christian believers, owing to the accidents of race or culture, of political or social history may be divided into a variety of 'sects,' i.e. of paths or ways of following Christ,—yet all belong to the one Church, to the same calling as myself; and they alone are schismatics who disown and make themselves strange to their brethren, refusing them the right hand of fellowship. 'These be they that separate themselves,' and not those who have been alienated or repelled by the pride of official bigots, or who through ignorance or, it may be, through the very depth and sincerity of their convictions cannot conscientiously conform to all the outward expressions of faith and worship which have come down from bygone generations. And surely if they were faithful to their stewardship the first duty of those who guide our Church would be, instead of providing facilities for the revival of these mediaeval customs which offend, to search diligently by what further reforms in our services they might overcome the objections or, if you will, the prejudices of tender consciences; how, in other words, by purging our Church of what is not Apostolic, they might make it more truly Catholic. Why in the name of truth and common sense do not our Bishops begin by clearly and manfully repudiating that pretence which would be ludicrous if it were not so offensive to our fellow believers and such blasphemy against the unfettered Spirit of God, that they are the only trustworthy channels of ministerial Grace? If on the other hand I were allowed to plead with our Nonconformist brethren, I would entreat them in the name of the country they love, to cease clamouring for disendowment and dis-

establishment, and to use rather their best endeavours in Parliament and out of Parliament to make our Church the Church of the Nation not of a Sect (as it is fast becoming), and to claim therein their most precious birthright as Englishmen.

Lastly, in holding this as in holding every article of Faith, we must remember to look above and beyond 'the things which are seen.' It is no true faith, nay it is no faith at all, which clings to any outward and visible institution or looks to such for salvation. To the eye of faith—for those who really believe in ONE Catholic and Apostolic Church, the distinctions between church and chapel, episcopalian and dissenter, disappear; and 'while we look not at the things which are seen' but 'at the things which are not seen,' we can discern behind the distinctions of visible churches a unity which is higher and spiritual but not the less real.

In the power then of our 'faith' in One Catholic Church and in the name of that charity which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things,' let us endeavour to order our dealings with all believers,—not according to the jealous and transitory differences of shortsighted mortals, but looking for and trusting to that higher communion and fellowship which we share with all believers in our common Lord and Master. Thus may we show forth not only with our lips but in our lives the creed we all profess, though we follow it with so many inconsistencies, and so little faith:—*One* Church, for there can be no other, *Catholic*, because it is for all, *Apostolic*, because it rests upon the testimony and mission of those who were 'sent forth' to preach the Gospel unto every creature. Amen.

*Other Sermons by the same.*

(Price 6*d.* each, except No. 8.)

1. **No Continuing City:** A Sermon for the disillusioned.
2. **The fitness and efficacy of our Saviour's Passion.**
3. **Children of the Free;** A Plea for rational religion.
4. **The Knowledge of 'Jesus only' considered as a principle of Christian doctrine.**
5. **The Divine Mind revealed in Christ Jesus.**
6. **The Tale-bearer and his more noxious Congeners.** A Sermon for Lent.
7. **Stewards of the Mysteries.** A Sermon for Ember-tide.
8. **The Wise-Woman of Tekoah.** A Plea for Comprehension. 1*s.*
9. **A Hope full of Immortality.** A Funeral Sermon on Professor F. Max-Müller.
10. **The Blessedness of seeing and hearing the Christ.** A Sermon for Sceptics.

OXFORD AND LONDON: JAMES PARKER AND CO.











519.11 12  
391370

Bidder, Henry Jardine  
[Sermons.]

RTheol  
B

**University of Toronto  
Library**

---

**DO NOT  
REMOVE  
THE  
CARD  
FROM  
THIS  
POCKET**

---

Acme Library Card Pocket  
LOWE-MARTIN CO. LIMITED

