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S E R M O N S ,

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM ARCHER BUTLER, M.A.

LATE PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN.

FIRST SERIES.

EDITED,

With a Memoir of the Author's Life,

BY

THE VERY REV. THOMAS WOODWARD, M.A.

DEAN OF DOWN.

FIRST AMERICAN

FROM THE THIRD CAMBRIDGE EDITION.

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NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHERS.

IN presenting this work to the American public, the publishers desire to intimate that it is printed verbatim from the edition which has been issued from the Cambridge press in England, and edited with great care from the manuscripts of the author, with the exception of two sermons, which have been omitted in consequence of their special character. It has long been the practice in Dublin to select some of the most eloquent clergymen of the Irish Establishment to preach the annual sermons on behalf of the different charities of that city. Professor Butler was often called to discharge that duty. Several of the sermons here given will show how it was performed by him. Those omitted refer to the subject of education in Ireland as conducted by the Government, and as they are to a certain extent national or sectional, it has been thought unadvisable to enlarge the volume by their reproduction in this country.

It is unnecessary here to expatiate on the character of these sermons. For eloquence, beauty of illustration, richness of imagery, intense fervor, deep spirituality, profound piety, and lucid exhibition of the great truths of Revelation, they will be found to take rank with the highest productions of modern theological literature. The North British Review (February 1856), in noticing these sermons, justly says: "From the list now given, we must select for more special notice the name of one destined, if we mistake not, to take the highest place among writers of our English tongue—whose sermons we would recommend to

our readers, not only for their force and subtilty of thought, brillianee of fancy, and exuberant eloquence of words, but for that spirit of love, that profound and glowing devotion by which they are animated, and with which no one can come into sympathizing contact without feeling himself elevated and refined. We know Professor Butler but in part. Too early for us and for his earthly fame and usefulness (he died in 1848, in his 34th year), he was cut off in early manhood—a manhood rich in promise of the ripest fruits of genius. Few men ever brought to the service of the Christian ministry such a conjunction of needful qualities, and few sermons in our language exhibit the same rare combination of excellencies: imagery almost as rich as Taylor's; oratory as vigorous often as South's; judgment as sound as Barrow's; a style as attractive, but more copious, original and forcible than Atterbury's; piety as elevated as Howe's; and a fervor as intense at times as Baxter's."¹

¹ It is to be hoped that the demand for the volume now given to the public will warrant the speedy appearance of the second series of Sermons, and encourage the publishers in their desire to issue the magnificent "Lectures on Ancient Philosophy."

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MEMOIR.

[The facts here presented are condensed from the Memoir of Professor Butler, by the Rev. Thomas Woodward, M. A., the learned and pious Dean of Down.]

WILLIAM ARCHER BUTLER was born at Annerville, near Clonmel, of an ancient and highly respectable family. His father was a member of the Established Church; his mother, for whose memory he entertained the liveliest affection, was a zealous Roman Catholic. By her solicitude, he was baptized and educated in the Romish faith. Owing to the imperfect system of registration which prevailed in the Romish Church, there is no record extant of his birth or baptism, but those who are best acquainted with the fact affirm that he was born in the year 1814, and, according to this computation, at the time of his decease he had only reached his thirty-fourth year. In early childhood his residence was removed to Garnavilla, a lovely spot on the banks of the river Suir, about two miles from the town of Cahir. The enchanting scenery of the neighborhood made an ineffaceable impression upon his susceptible temperament, and developed almost in infancy his poetic talents. He almost "lisp'd in rhyme," and some of his boyish compositions would do honor to the maturest efforts of the British muse.

At nine years of age he was removed for education to the endowed school of Clonmel, under the care of the celebrated Dr. Bell, who was famed for his success in training a great number of eminent scholars, and who always secured the filial affection of his pupils while under his care, and their love and veneration in mature life. Butler soon became endeared to his instructor, and a peculiar favorite in the school. He was never a proficient in the noisy games of his coevals, but his playful wit and amiable manners made him universally popular. He was not a hard student in the ordinary courses, but he was a constant and a discursive reader. He was early familiar with the philosophical writings of Lord Bacon (of which he was an enthusiastic admirer), and of the most distinguished of the Scottish metaphysicians. He perused the classics as a poet, rather than a philologist. While still a schoolboy, he

had penetrated deep into the profundities of metaphysics, his most loved pursuit, and was accomplished in the whole circle of the *belles-lettres*.

It was during his pupilage at Clonmel, and about two years before his entrance into college, that the important change took place in his religious views by which he passed from the strictest sect of Roman Catholicism into an earnest and decided member of the Church of England. From infancy he had been deeply impressed with a sense of religion. His moral feelings were extraordinarily sensitive. For long hours in the night-season he would lie prostrate on the ground, filled with remorse for offences which would have produced no anxiety in the minds of other well conducted youths. He had been accustomed to attend to confession, and on one occasion when he hoped to find peace to his wounded spirit, the unsympathizing confessor received the secrets of his soul as if they were but morbid and distempered imaginations, and threw all his poignant emotions back on himself. A shock was given to the moral nature of the ardent and earnest youth. He that day began to doubt. He examined the controversy for himself with intense anxiety, and his powerful mind was, by Divine grace, soon enabled to discover and rest on the truth.

On entering Trinity College, his literary powers soon became well known. He displayed little love for mathematical studies, but his productions in prose and verse were so pre-eminently distinguished, that they attracted the attention of the heads of the college, and stamped him as a man of rare and varied genius. During his under-graduate course, he became a copious contributor to the periodical literature of the day. His refined taste and eloquence of diction soon made him one of the most attractive of reviewers. In the *Dublin University Magazine* alone, there appeared during his college course enough of poetry and of essays on historical, critical and speculative subjects, to fill several volumes. It would be hard to point to compositions which exhibit greater variety of power in a single mind, than the Analysis of the Philosophy of Berkeley, the articles on Sismondi, on Whewell's History of the Inductive Sciences, on Oxford and Berlin Theology, and the playful effusions entitled Evenings with our Younger Poets.

It would be out of place, in a brief Memoir like this, to give such selections from these essays as would serve to display the critical acumen of Professor Butler; neither can we afford to give at adequate length, such specimens of his poetical powers, as would fairly indicate the depth of his emotional feelings, and the capacity of his descriptive powers. The following lines were written by him, shortly after his arrival in the University. They were afterwards printed in *Blackwood's Magazine*, for June, 1835. They are a fair, though far from the best, specimen of their author's manner.

THE EVEN-SONG OF THE STREAMS.

Lo! couch'd within an odorous vale, where May
 Had smiled the tears of April into flowers,
 I was alone in thought one sunny even :
 Mine eye was wandering in the cloudlets gray,
 Mass'd into wreaths above the golden bowers,
 Where slept the sun in the far western heaven.

I was alone, and watch'd the glittering threads,
 So deftly woven upon the purple woof
 By severing clouds, as parting into lines
 Of slender light, their broken brilliance spreads
 Thin floating fragments on the blue-arch'd roof,
 And each, a waving banner, streams and shines.

A mountain lay below the sun, its blue
 Veil'd in a robe of luminous mist, and seeming
 To melt into the radiant skies above ;
 A broken turret near, and the rich hue
 Of faded sunlight through its window gleaming,
 Fainting to tremulous slumber on a grove.

But Evening grew more pale. Her zoneless hair
 Wound in dim dusky tresses round the skies,
 And dews like heavenly love, with unseen fall,
 Came showering. Insect forms swarm on the air,
 To dazzle with their tangling play mine eyes,
 That drooped and closed,—and mystery bosomed all!

Unsleeping thus—yet *dreamingly* awake—
 Fancies came wooing me, and gently rose
 To the soft sistering music of a stream
 That pilgrimed by ; and, as I list, they take
 A form, a being—such as deep repose
 Begets—a reverie, almost a dream.

I heard, I read the language of the waters—
 That low monotonous murmur of sweet sound,
 Unheard at noon, but creeping out at even !
 That language known but to the delicate daughters
 Of Tethys, the bright Naiads. All around
 The thrilling tones gush forth to silent heaven.

“ We come,” they sweetly sang, “ we come from roving,
 The long still summer day, 'mid banks of flowers,
 Through meads of waving emerald, groves, and woods.
 Ours were delights : the lilies, mild and loving,
 Bent o'er us their o'erarching bells—those bowers
 For fays hung floating on our bubbling floods.

“ We come—and whence ? At early morn we sprung,
 Like free-born mountaineers, from rugged hills,
 Where bursts our rock-ribbed fountain. We have sped
 Through many a quiet vale, and there have sung
 The murmuring descant of the playful rills,
 To thank the winds for the sweet scent they shed !

“Our sapphire floods were tintured by the skies
 With their first burst of blushes, as we broke
 At morn upon a meadow. Not a voice
 Rose from the solemn earth as ruby dyes
 Swam like a glory round us, and awoke
 The trance of heaven, and bade the world rejoice.

“Enwreath'd in mists, the perfumed breath of morn,
 Our infancy of waters freshly bright
 Cleft the hush'd fields, warbling a matin wild ;
 While beaming from the kindled heavens, and borne
 On clouds instinct with many-colored light,
 The spirit of nature heard the strain, and smiled !

“Heaven's flushing East, its western wilds as pale
 As is the wan cheek of deserted love,
 Its changeful clouds, its changeless deeps of blue,
 Lay glass'd within us when that misty veil,
 Evanid, disenshrouding field and grove,
 Left us, a mirror of each heavenly hue,

“An echo of Heaven's loveliest tints ! But lo !
 The spell that bound us broke ; in foaming leap
 Our sheeted waters rush'd ; our silvery vest
 Of light o'erhung the cliffs, our gorgeous bow
 Arch'd them at mid-fall,—till below the steep
 The maniac waves sunk murmuring into rest.

“Now mourn'd our lone stream down a dusky vale,
 Like passion wearied into dull despair,
 The sole sad music of that sunless spot ;
 And prison'd from the sunbeam and the gale
 By nodding crags above, all wildly bare,
 We slowly crept where life and light were not.

“To greet us from that salvage home there came
 A Form,—'twas not the Spirit of the wild,
 But one more mortal, on whose wasted cheek
 Sorrow had written death ; a child of Fame,
 Perchance, yet far less Fame's than Nature's child,
 He loved the languid lapse of streams to seek.

“Some cherish'd woe, some treasur'd fond regret,
 Lay round his heart, and drew the gentlest tear
 That ever sanctified a pitying stream,
 Or crystalliz'd in lucent cells was set
 By Naiads, in their wavy locks to wear
 As priceless jewel of celestial beam.

“The dirge of Nature is her Streams ! Their song
 Speaks a soft music to man's grief, and those
 Most love them who have loved all else in vain :
 We charmed that lone one as he paced along
 From the dark thralldom of his dream of woes,—
 His sadness died before our sadder strain !

“Once more amid the joyaunce of the sun,
 And light, the life of Nature, we have taught
 The pensive mourner of our marge to smile
 In answer to our smile of beams, and won
 The venom from the poisoned heart, and wrought
 A spell to bless the wearied brain awhile !

“The imaged sun floats proudly on our breast,
Ever beside each wanderer, though there be
 Many to tread our path of turf and flowers :
 A thousand sparkling orbs for one imprest
 On us,—for ours is the bright mimicry
 Of Nature, changing with her changeful hours.

“And thus we have a world, a lovely world,
 A softened picture of the upper sphere,
 Sunk in our crystal depths and glassy caves ;
 And every cloud beneath the heavens unfurled,
 And every shadowy tint they wear, sleeps here,
 Here in this voiceless kingdom of the waves.

“On to the ocean! ever, ever on!
 Our banded waters, hurrying to the deep,
 Lift to the winds a song of wilder strife ;
 And white plumes glittering in to-morrow’s sun,
 Shall crest our waves when starting out of sleep
 For the glad tumult of their ocean-life.

“On to the ocean! through the midnight chill,
 Beneath the glowing stars, by woodlands dim,
 A silvery wreath of beauty shall we twine.
 Thus may our course—ceaseless—unwearied still—
 Pure—blessing as it flows—aye shadow him
 Our sources who unlock’d with hand divine!”

The soft and golden Eve had glided through
 Her portals in the west, and night came round.
 The glamour ceased, and nothing met mine eye
 But waters, waters dyed in deepening blue—
 Nothing mine ear, but a low bubbling sound,
 Mingled with mine—and the faint night-wind’s—sigh.

Among the many debts of gratitude which the University of Dublin owes to the memory of Provost Lloyd, not the least is due for his institution of the Ethical Moderatorship at the Degree examination. The intellect of Ireland seems peculiarly adapted for logical and ethical speculation ; not less so at the present day than ten centuries ago, when the scholastic fame of Scotus Erigena was attracting to Irish Academies the rising talent of Western Europe. In November, 1834, the first examination for the newly instituted prize took place ; and the name of William Archer Butler stands the first upon the roll of Ethical Moderators.

As his college course was drawing to a close, his friends became anxious

that he should decide on a profession, and the Bar was urged on him as the field where his talents would win a sure and ample reward. But the turmoil of the Courts was wholly abhorrent to his tastes; and he shrunk from the thought of resigning the charms of literature and moral science even for a certain prospect of the ermined robe. His habits inclined him strongly to a College life; but his distaste for mathematics had ever prevented him from continuous application to the exact sciences, and without a profound and extensive acquaintance with this department of knowledge it is impossible to attain to a Fellowship in the University. At the expiration of his scholarship, his connection with the University must have ceased but for the intervention of the excellent Provost. The discriminating eye of Dr. Lloyd perceived the extraordinary abilities of the first Ethical Moderator, and the loss which the University would sustain by his removal. By his energetic exertions, a Professorship of Moral Philosophy was founded in 1837; and immediately, on the expiration of his scholarship, Butler was appointed to this distinguished and arduous post.

The young Professor was now upon a field worthy of his endowments. His lectures were as remarkable for their glowing eloquence as for their profound philosophy, and his course soon attracted the thoughtful minds of the University to his class-room, where they were enchanted and delighted with the gorgeousness of his diction, the felicity of his illustration, and the depth of his erudition.

The "Dublin University Magazine," referring to his Ethical Course in 1842, says: "On resuming our attendance we found him sketching the earlier Grecian schools, a subject to which he contrived to impart an interest, we confess, we did not think could be attached to it in any hands. He afterwards proceeded regularly to the Socratic revolution, and so to Plato, to whom three or four laborious courses were devoted. Here he was evidently on congenial ground. We thought his refutation of the common mistakes about Plato, especially his explanation of the 'Idea,' in its various applications, as the fundamental point of the Platonic philosophy, peculiarly impressive and convincing. It is curious enough, and perhaps characteristic of the times, that this ancient system seems at present to be attracting such very general attention in various countries. At the same time when Mr. Butler was minutely unfolding its mysteries in Dublin, his able brother professor at Oxford was, we believe, performing the same task there; and in France and Germany a similar interest is, perhaps, even more deeply felt. Aristotle, also, received a large measure of consideration; but we confess it did not appear to us (whether from the lecturer's want of sympathy with the subject, or from its own inferiority of interest) that this topic was made as attractive as his disquisitions on Plato. Be this as it may, the entire of these courses struck us as characterized by a large-minded appreciation of every variety

of excellence—a catholic spirit, that sought to detect good in everything, and never forgot in its defence of truth the indulgence due to any errors that could find an apology in the intellectual and moral elevation of those who held them. In every instance we observed that which is, after all, the true characteristic of the genuine philosophic spirit—a disposition to separate the germ of truth from any errors that had gathered round it, and, following out the advice we once heard him ably enforce, refute incomplete or partial views, not by *rejecting* but by *completing* them. We are more anxious for the publication of these historical lectures than of any other part of the Professor's labors. We possess scarcely anything of this description, complete or satisfactory, in the language; and we certainly cannot conceive any performances more calculated to stimulate the general taste for this beautiful, though neglected, department of inquiry."

Simultaneously with his appointment to the Chair of Ethics, Mr. Butler was presented by the Board of Trinity College to a Parish in the Diocese of Raphoe, County of Donegal. He ministered to a large and delighted flock except when his College duties demanded his presence in Dublin. In the pulpit he accommodated himself with admirable success to the comprehension of his people, and finding that his rural auditory were more benefited by direct addresses, he soon ceased to write and read his sermons. His whole faculties were devoted to the ministry he had undertaken. At one time he was found applying his musical skill to the training of a village choir. At another he was found casting aside his loftiest speculations in mental science and his erudite researches into Grecian and German philosophy, to obey the call of suffering and of sorrow. His parishioners were widely scattered over an extensive region on the shores of the Atlantic; and the habitations of many of them were difficult of access even on foot, but they were all known to him, and all visited with constant assiduity. In 1842, he was promoted to another Parish in the same diocese by the Board of Trinity College, in which his duties were less onerous, but his labors were scarcely less abundant. In a life thus made up of parochial ministrations and closet study, interspersed with his College duties, it is hard to find exciting incidents for biographical narrative. It was during these years of his ministerial and pastoral activity that he became so intimately connected as a preacher with the charities of Dublin and with other leading institutions of a benevolent character, for whose welfare he was often called on to plead in the pulpit.

In the year 1845, the Roman Catholic controversy seems to have largely engaged the attention of Professor Butler. The letters which he produced on this subject have been collected and published in a separate form. In a notice of the work, the *North British Review* characterizes it as "one of the ablest refutations of Romanism in its latest and most refined forms," while an English Prelate declares it to be "a work which ought to be in the library of every Student of Divinity."

The famine of 1846-7, which visited the northern province in general with comparative lightness, was felt with appalling intensity in the neighborhood with which Mr. Butler was connected. The value of the Parochial system, even in a temporal aspect in districts which could be reached by no other machinery, was then powerfully impressed on the minds of many not disposed to regard the established Church with friendly eyes. The exertions of Professor Butler were ceaseless and untiring. Literature, philosophy, and divinity were all postponed to the labors of relieving the suffering in his parish. From morning till evening he superintended the distribution of food, often toiling with his own hands in this ministry of love. In the latter part of 1847, and the first six months of the next year, Mr. Butler was employed in preparation for a work on Faith. Never was the great subject undertaken by one more competent to attain the end which he designed. His collections contain a vast mass of materials drawn from the Fathers, the Schoolmen, the Continental Reformers, and the Anglican Divines. No clue, unfortunately, is left to guide us as to the method which he intended, or the system which he proposed to construct.

While thus employed, that summons came which removed him from the scene of faith to the "fruition of the glorious Godhead."

He had been appointed to preach on the occasion of an ordination by the Bishop of Raphoe. Unfortunately, according to his usual custom, the discourse was unwritten. His text was Matt. xxviii. 18-20. One of the clergymen present has given a description of the great impression made by this discourse. Speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity, he says the eloquent preacher went on to show that this tenet, "so far from being merely abstract and speculative, was intensely personal and practical, calculated to form the staple of the teaching of an Apostolic Church. More especially as regarded the Divinity of our Lord, he said it might be proved by internal evidence to any mind which could be brought to feel what sin was, for such a mind could never feel sure of an adequate atonement without an infinite sacrifice. This led him to speak of those divines of the Anglican Church, in whose writings would be found an armory against all heretics, as well as the most touching lessons of practical holiness. He took a series of these authors; he dismissed each with a few sentences, but not before he had characterized his peculiar excellencies and made the audience feel his distinguishing merits. His description of Taylor, in particular, was *startlingly* beautiful, and *literally took away your breath*. He recommended us to read some works of a practical character by dissenters. Baxter, Howe, and Edwards, were amongst the number mentioned."

On his return from the discharge of this duty his death sickness struck him. He had heated himself by walking before he took his place in the public conveyance by which he travelled. He became chilled, and on

his arrival at home fever rapidly set in. He was soon aware of the dangerous nature of his malady, and expressed a wish, if it were God's will, that he might survive one month, until he had completed his work on Faith. One ejaculation was constantly on his tongue, "Christ my righteousness!" The Rev. Mr. Ball, a neighboring clergyman who attended him with a brother's tenderness, declares that his very wanderings were full of the most splendid eloquence and exalted devotion. He breathed his last without a struggle, and on the 5th of July, 1848, his spirit departed so softly that those who watched his bed knew not that he was no more on earth. His remains were laid in his own churchyard amid the tears of several thousands, who, with the Bishop, his brethren in the ministry, and the gentry of the neighborhood, had attended on the solemn occasion.

This brief notice cannot be better concluded than by applying to Professor Butler the words in which he closes his own masterly sketch of the life of Bishop Berkeley:—

"We have written of Berkeley as an Irishman; but we feel that such a man belongs not to Ireland, but to human nature; and never did the panegyric of epitaph lay by its customary pomp of falsehood more sincerely than when it called upon every lover of religion and of his country to rejoice that such a man has lived. So much for his earthly career; the rest is hidden from our feeble eyes. But if *we* must leave the Christian, the philosopher, the patriot, at the moment when all human biography must resign its task, we may well believe that his subsequent life is taken up by the pen of angelic recorders!"

The sermons in this volume were, with few exceptions, written without any view to publication. They have been edited from manuscripts often abbreviated, and very difficult to decipher. The rest of the manuscript sermons which Professor Butler left behind him have been carefully edited by the Rev. J. A. Jeremie, D. D., Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge; while his lectures on the History of Ancient Philosophy have also appeared, with notes, by William Hepworth Thompson, M. A., Fellow of Trinity College, and Regius Professor of Greek in Cambridge. The second series of sermons has, perhaps, attracted even more attention than the volume now given to the public; while the literary world in Britain is fully satisfied that there is no exaggeration in the language of Mr. Thompson when, in speaking of the lectures on Ancient Philosophy, he says:—

"Of the dialectics and physics of Plato, they are the only exposition at once full, accurate, and popular, with which I am acquainted, being far more accurate than the French, and incomparably more popular than the German treatise on these departments of the Platonic philosophy."

SERMON I.

PRACTICAL USES OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S COMING.

(Preached, in Advent, before the University of Dublin.)

Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.—1 COR. i. 7.

THE Church of God, my brethren, standing midway in Eternity, and finding little in the Present but trial and difficulty, looks for her consolation mainly to the Past and to the Future. These are the inheritance of which Faith and Hope make her the blessed possessor. In the Past she contemplates the origin, in the Future the fulfilment of her joy; in both alike, one unaltered author and channel of mercies. In Him—"in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever,"—she beholds the sure foundation of her own stability through time and eternity. Nor this alone. Associated with Him in ineffable union, she reads in His history her own; she is identified with all His fortunes; she pursues His footsteps; she becomes the perpetuated image of His whole existence. As He leads, she humbly follows;—"Christ the first—afterward they that are Christ's" is the rule, not of the resurrection only, but of all things. He came first in lowliness, and His Church began in lowliness; He was visited with the Holy Ghost in Jordan, and she on the day of Pentecost; He labored in weariness and watchings, and had not where to lay His head till the Cross became His pillow—she, too, was long a houseless wanderer, solemnizing her holy mysteries in

sepulchres, and scorned by the souls she would have shed her blood to rescue; He, after His day of martyrdom, ascended in power to heaven, and she after hers became mighty upon earth. Yet, as His victory is to our eyes invisible, so is much of her glory; and as His triumph is in a manner unfinished because unseen, so is she—and, alas! in a degree far more—as yet imperfect, ineffectual, incomplete. But he shall once more ascend in visible public supremacy, and then shall *her* enthronement be public, and her triumph consummate also. Thus, though Christ be divine, and the Church be human, the destinies of both are truly linked by bonds no strength shall ever sunder: to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” is her office, her privilege, and her glory for everlasting.

How deep an interest gathers round every great crisis in the history of that mighty Leader, whose deathless life is thus not only the pledge but the model of our own! If, amid all the errors, infirmities, and failures of the Church, she still can catch in the past story of her immortal Spouse the image she was meant, and in her weakness still strives as she may, to copy; what should be her joy to reflect on the far more glorious series of events in which He is yet to be her forerunner! If, as at this season, she think at each returning service, with saddened yet happy heart, of that mystery of unimaginable love that brought Him first “to visit us in great humility;” how ought the eye to kindle and the heart to beat, as the picture flashes on the imagination, of that second coming, in which, through all the terrors of judgment, her saints shall be safe, and when the anger that consumes a world shall be but the minister and precursor of a love that restores it immortally for her!

Yet of this future coming,—of this true Advent-season of eternity, though much is known, much too is hidden. There are secrets the Divine Bridegroom whispers not; that the “Spirit and the Bride” may still say “Come.” Between the Church and the Church’s head there still subsists, even

in this intimate union, a mysterious separation ; and on the period of the separation a holy reserve. It has already lasted for ages, and we cannot dare to predict at what epoch it is to close. The veil that hangs before the celestial sanctuary is still undrawn ; and it is vain for us to "marvel," as of old the expectants of Zacharias, that the High Priest of our profession "tarrieth so long in the Temple." He has willed it, that, certain of His eventual arrival, we should remain in uncertainty as to its destined moment. "The times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power" He would have us desire, and expect, and conjecture, but not dare to define.

At this season, then, which the Church has appropriated directly to the first, and indirectly, by the Spirit of her services, to the second coming of her Lord, we can scarcely fall upon a more interesting subject of reflection than the state and form of the Scripture revelations, in special relation to this very uncertainty with which He has been pleased to invest the awful hour of His return among us. The numberless schemes of prophetic chronology that abound in the Church, while they worthily fulfil His purpose that our thoughts should be much engaged in this holy theme, as clearly evince, by their mutual differences, His equal purpose, that absolute certainty regarding it should as yet be refused to man. Why is it good for us to be thus denied certainty, yet invited to anticipation ? Why has He made us sure of the event and uncertain of the time ? Why is this combination of knowledge and ignorance better for us than a clear and absolute knowledge could be ? What are the feelings which, by this arrangement, He would substitute in place of the undoubting assurance He withholds ?

The variety, the apparent contrariety of the Scripture declarations as to the immediacy or remoteness of the second Advent of Christ is, as you know, a main cause of the perplexity which involves this subject. Of course I do not mean on this occasion to betray you into the labyrinth of

dissension and speculation in which it is entangled. I restrict myself to a single, comprehensive, and practical train of thought. I seem to myself to see in this very variety, even in this seeming opposition of predictions, an arrangement specially and admirably adapted for the purpose of cherishing that incessant expectation, stimulating that eager inquiry, and enkindling that anxious desire, which together form the homage of intellect and affections that an absent Lord demands and approves in His servants. I find that this blending of light and obscurity leaves us in a state more suitable and more profitable than either absolute ignorance or perfect knowledge; that it awakens feelings which the former would fail to excite, and the latter would quench as they arose. At the same time,—which is most remarkable and important,—I see this diversified language of prophecy in no case chargeable with real contradiction; I see it everywhere so skilfully guarded and compensated, as, on striking the balance of the whole, to be found affirming nothing which any honest inquirer can regard as refuted by the result.

In asking you, then, to enter with me a little more deeply into this inquiry, let me endeavor to show you how carefully the word of God leaves the period uncertain, how carefully it presses it upon us as ever impending, how carefully this is done without real contradiction, and how the whole arrangement tends to produce practical results of the highest value.

At one time, then, our Lord seems to speak as if, in the literal and ordinary acceptation of the words, “immediately after” the destruction of Jerusalem,—which “this generation should not pass” till it had witnessed, the standard of His glory should be unfurled in the heavens; and as if the fall of unhappy Israel should be the signal to His trusting disciples that their “final redemption drew nigh.” With the same apparent significance His Apostle Paul speaks of himself and his brethren as “them that are alive and re-

main" to the coming of Christ in glory; and declares that "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." St James announces that "the coming of the Lord is nigh;" St Peter, that "the end of all things is at hand;" and Christ himself, reappearing in the revelation to St John, closes His warnings with the thrice-repeated assurance, "I come quickly." Those who interpret such declarations in the more obvious sense would, of course, add to them, as confirmations, all those numerous passages in which St Paul exhorts his converts (as in the text) to "wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus," to "wait for the Son from heaven," to "Look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of God the Saviour," to "wait patiently for Christ,"—expressions which at first seem to make the certainty of His speedy manifestation a direct practical motive and maxim.

It is, of course, not to be wondered at that these phrases have formed a favorite topic of infidel sarcasm. It is, indeed, no more than our Lord's own intimation that His professed servants would be found to "say in their hearts that their Lord *delayed* His coming;" no more than St Peter's prediction, that "in the last days should come scoffers saying, Where is *the promise* of His coming?"

Yet nothing can be more demonstrably certain than that these passages, however calculated to stimulate expectation, were never intended to *assert* the immediate advent of Christ. It is plain that there are two supposable methods of argument by which such a point as this might be established; either by going into a detailed investigation of the passages adduced, which, however, to do it justice, would probably be too elaborate an undertaking for the present occasion; or by adducing contemporary assertions, in direct negation of the alleged doctrine, from the lips of the very authors themselves, a proof which I prefer, as, for our present purpose, simpler and more satisfactory. Now these fall naturally into *two* classes. Some seem to point to a

remote period, at least as forcibly as the passages formerly cited point to a nearer one; others expressly mention the period as one on which all more definite information was to be purposely withheld. It is plain that both equally negative the supposition of an intention in the inspired authors to limit the period to their own generation.

Thus, the same Lord, who seemed just now to announce so speedy an arrival, intimates that the Gospel must be preached to a vast extent before "the end" come; and compares His own return to that of the master of servants, who comes "after a long time" to reckon with them. The same St Paul who addressed the Thessalonians in his first Epistle, as if they, yet alive, were to behold the coming of Christ, in his second warns them that his words were meant to justify no such certainty, inasmuch as that the day of Christ was to be preceded by a great and conspicuous apostasy. The same St James who had spoken of the same coming as "drawing nigh," introduces his assertion by exhortations of endurance, and illustrations derived from the "long patience" of the husbandman waiting for the fruit of the earth. The same St Peter, who in his first Epistle contemplates the "end of all things as at hand," and bids the Christian hope for the "grace to be brought at the revelation of Christ," in his second obviates objections to the tardy march of the expected Judge, not by denying the fact, but by reminding his reader that "the Lord is not slack as men count slackness, but long-suffering to us-ward," and that the cycles of His providence transcend our feeble grasp, "one day being with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The same book of revelation which promises the rapid return of Christ unfolds an antecedent series of events probably sufficient to occupy long revolving ages.

The other class of passages, which *expressly deny* us all definite information as to the Advent, are even more convincing, because even more distinct. We need not go be-

yond the language of our Lord, whom we find employing every form of illustration to represent the unexpectedness, even to His own servants, of an event which surely could not be unexpected if He had taught them to prepare for it as fixed and immediate. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son [in His capacity as human prophet], but the Father." "The Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." "The master of the house" may come "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning." But whenever he come, it shall be "as a thief," it shall be as the flood of Noah, it shall be "as a snare on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

It is, then, palpable, as against the infidel objector, that the expressions which seem to predict an immediate arrival cannot have been thus *meant* by authors who in the same discourse,—often in the same context,—speak of its period as probably remote, and as wholly unrevealed. You will naturally ask, what then could have been the origin or purport of these ambiguous phrases? Why is the Advent ever said to be "near" if it be certain that those who said so cannot have meant their words to be understood as literal and positive assertions of its speedy approach? The ordinary solution refers them all to the destruction of Jerusalem, as being virtually "the coming of Christ," in the manifestation of His divine power, to take vengeance on his enemies, and in the overthrow of the old, as a necessary preliminary to the establishment of His own new, Dispensation. But the truth is, that this interpretation, however it seem to apply in some instances, is seldom rigorously necessary. The difficulty undoubtedly arises from the prejudices of our limited capacity, and still more limited compass of experience. Let the language of Scripture be estimated in reference to the mighty system of which it treats, and the apparent contradiction nearly or wholly vanishes. It is plain that that period which is distant in

one scheme of things may be near in another, where events are on a vaster scale, and moved in a mightier orbit. That which is a whole life to the ephemera is but a day to the man; that which in the brief succession of authentic human history is counted as remote is but a single page in the volume of the heavenly records. The coming of Christ may be distant as measured on the scale of human life, but may be "near," and "at hand," and "at the door," when the interval of the two advents is compared, not merely with the four thousand years which were but its preparation, but with the line of infinite ages which it is itself preparing. View the interval that spans the first and second coming, as we do, who are close to the object, because in the midst of it, and it swells to a vast extent; view it as we shall yet do, from some far height in the measureless eternity of the Church triumphant; view it as these holy men were wont to do, the first stage in an infinite progress, and it lessens to a point! This seems to be sufficient to account for the use of terms importing nearness, rapidity, immediate approach, without supposing them in any respect contradicted by the event. The coming of Christ was remote to the Apostles, as the opposite side of this earth is remote to us; it was "near" to the Apostles, as the same breadth of the globe is still but a point in the system of revolving worlds to which our globe belongs.

But of this peculiar choice of language there is something more to be said, in relation to my immediate subject, the practical *use and purpose* of this complicated arrangement of the predictions about the Lord's coming. It would be the perfection of a revelation designed to operate on the heart, to employ forms of phrasology which should at the same time justify themselves to the reflective inquirer, and yet, to the mass of mankind (for whose use it must ever be mainly meant), tend to suggest thoughts and feelings, such as a more literal statement must in many cases altogether fail to generate. This, which is one of the chief excellen-

cies of the whole Bible language (though a common ground of the short-sighted cavils of infidelity), is remarkably exemplified in the case before us. These forms of phrase, which startle us as with the very presence of Christ, seem specially and exquisitely adapted to keep alive expectation, by bringing emphatically before us the perpetual *possibility* of an immediate manifestation; and thus, indirectly second all those express exhortations which make the hope and desire of the coming of Christ a leading motive and impulse in the whole life of the Christian disciple.

It is the need and the value of these and similar practical habits, which, as I have intimated, have carried the revelation of the Advent of Christ to a certain point, and at that point have bid it stop; have left the fact certain, but the time unfixed. The impatient curiosity of man murmurs at such an arrangement; scepticism scorns a revelation whose scope is so limited; and even piety sometimes dares to wish it enlarged. It is well to show to both, in a few words, how much should be sacrificed if their wishes were gratified.

It is the confessed object of our blessed Master, in training His disciples for glory, that they should, in the school of this world, learn such divine arts as those of hope, of watchfulness, of fidelity, of humility, of earnest inquiry, of reverential awe. Consider for a moment what effect the definite announcement of His hour of coming would produce upon such attributes as those; consider what its uncertainty ought to effect in ourselves.

If, for example, it be our duty to *hope* and haste unto this glorious Epiphany, I may ask these precipitate speculators, how is the preservation of this hope consistent with a certainty,—and still more a certainty of distance? Would not the anxious and desiring solicitude that hangs upon the prospect of his appearing be suddenly, for all save the single generation that was to witness it, chilled into indifference by knowing it postponed in His own infallible

announcement? Again, if he would keep us in that state of *watchfulness* which He has himself so often and earnestly impressed, is it not to neutralize His own purpose to remove the uncertainty which alone can make that vigilance necessary? If, too, it be His declared intention to test our *fidelity*, does he not destroy His own avowed test, by rendering preparation necessary only to those who are apprised of his approaching presence? He desires to keep us *humble* as the sole path of ultimate exaltation. This very limitation, upon the most awful of all points of knowledge, is eminently calculated to cherish such a temper. Yet He would also habituate us to earnest *inquiry* and a holy curiosity as to His will and His movements; to publish them is to supersede it. Finally, He would have us *revere* and dread, even while we trust and love Him; and this He accomplishes, as in other ways, so by shrouding His march in mystery, revealing enough to win affection and to guide duty, but reserving His deeper purposes for the council-chamber of the Holy Trinity.

Such are some of the grounds which we may presume have operated to produce this limitation of the Church's knowledge as to the awful hour of her Lord's Advent; and such (you will all have anticipated me in observing) are equally forcible grounds for leaving in similar uncertainty that hour of death, which to each individual is practically the coming of his Judge. Such uncertainty is far more valuable than any certainty, for it is essential to our spiritual discipline, which that certainty would disturb or suspend. But while Christ is thus hidden alike as to person and purposes, He has not left Himself without witnesses on earth. Our own senses and experience are, in some measure, permitted to assist our belief; there is a sense in which we walk not alone "by faith," but "by sight" also. The Christian is not without startling and palpable proofs of the reality of the supernatural government under which he lives. Two mighty monuments, almost coeval, alike

manifest to our eyes, alike (save by His Providence) inexplicable to our reason, bear engraven on their majestic front the awful truth of the God of the Christians; two monuments,—of mercy one, of vengeance the other,—that silently arose as He left the world, that shall stand unshaken till He return to judge it,—the Church Catholic and the Jewish people. His acceptors and His rejectors, His brethren in the spirit and His brethren in the flesh, are alike perpetuated to be His evidence. “I am with you alway till the end of the world,” was His promise to the one; “Hereafter shall *ye* see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven,” His declaration to the other. If our faith is slow to apprehend an invisible King, let our eyes fall upon these His visible attestations. They stand in the world as the unchanging token and warrant of His truth, changeless alone while all around them changes. Already some eighteen centuries have tried their stability. Can we withhold our recognition of a power before which time sinks conquered and exhausted? Can we refuse to accept these living and breathing proofs, that though unseen He is not unreal,—that of very truth “all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him,”—that therefore, if He who had power to begin and continue have power to finish, the consummation is as sure as the commencement, the second Advent as certain as the first,—yea, that though now and awhile it be folded in its cloud, yet “as *the lightning* cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be”?

But to seek to penetrate more closely into these awful secrets is vain. A sacred obscurity envelopes them; the cloud that shrouded the actual presence of God on the mercy-seat shrouds still His expected presence on the throne of judgment. It is a purposed obscurity, a most salutary and useful obscurity, a wise and merciful denial of knowledge. In this matter it is His gracious will to be the perpetual subject of watchfulness, expectation, conjec-

ture, fear, desire,—but no more. To cherish anticipation, He has permitted gleams of light to cross the darkness; to baffle presumption, He has made them *only* gleams. He has harmonized with consummate skill, every part of His revelation to produce this general result;—now speaking as if a few seasons more were to herald the new heaven and the new earth, now as if His days were thousands of years; at one moment whispering into the ear of His disciple, at another retreating into the depth of infinite ages. It is His purpose thus to live in our faith and hope, remote yet near, pledged to no moment, possible at any; worshipped not with the consternation of a near, or the indifference of a distant certainty, but with the anxious vigilance that awaits a contingency ever at hand. This, the deep devotion of watchfulness, humility, and awe, He who knows us best knows to be the fittest posture for our spirits; therefore does He preserve the salutary suspense that ensures it, and therefore will He determine His Advent to no definite day in the calendar of eternity.

But every provision of divine wisdom is liable to human perversion; the more admirable they are in merciful arrangement, the more easily is their delicate mechanism of motives disordered. The very uncertainty, which was meant as a perpetual stimulant to watchfulness, is abused to security; and exactly as the invisibility of the Creator, which is His perfection, produces the miserable creed of the atheist, the obscurity that veils the hour of judgment, though meant in merciful warning, persuades the ungodly heart that none is ever to arrive.

But it is not so. Nature, and grace alike proclaim a glorified Messiah as indispensable to complete their appointed course. Nature, through all her regions,—uncorrupted Nature,—cries aloud for Him who is to rectify her unwilling disorders, to repair her shattered structures, to restore her oppressed energies, to vindicate her voice of conscience long despised, her sublime testimony to the Creator

so long questioned or overlooked. But what is even this to the demand of grace for the coming of Him, who is not only "the great God," but "our Saviour"? If the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain for the manifestation of the sons of God, what shall be the desire of the sons of God themselves? What shall be *their* ardor to realize that "liberty of the children of God," of which such great things are spoken; to behold their own lowliness glorified in the glory of the Man of Nazareth; their humble labors recognized by the approval of a God once more manifest in the flesh, their persevering faith vindicated, their hope consummated, their charity brightening into a reward eternal and infinite? They know well the value of that union of which I have spoken, which identifies the triumph of the Saviour and the saved. They rejoice to think that, as a humiliated Redeemer came first to point us the path of humiliation, so must a glorified Redeemer point us the path of glory; that the Captain of Salvation, who bore the cross in front of His army of believers, must come to teach them also how to wear the crown. Yes, all proclaims and demands the return of Christ to the world,—all but the unsanctified heart of man! There alone no voice is heard to welcome the mighty Stranger; there alone the dawn of this eternal orb is contemplated with hatred, horror, and dismay. Hearts that are inured to the world's corruptions, how shall they hail an immortality of meekness, simplicity, and love? Spirits habituated to seek unholy ends by means yet more unholy, how shall they endure "the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness"? Those whose whole hopes, prospects, and calculations are bound up with the fortunes of the world as it is, how shall they regard otherwise than with terror this awful revolution in the administration of the universe, when He who now rules behind a mass of permitted evil shall himself personally and visibly assume the reins of universal empire? The prophet has seen and heard their

terrors, when he represents even “the kings of the earth, and the great, and the rich, and the mighty,” as saying “to the mountain and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” “The wrath of *the Lamb!*” The word, even in a context of vengeance and of woe, still whispers mercy, grace, and peace. Even on the judgment-throne it is rich with the tender memories of Gethsemane and Calvary; even amid the dread solemnities of omnipotent anger it speaks of a scene more sublimely divine than all their terrors. The chosen title of crucified innocence, of patience un murmuring, of love self-sacrificing,—I will leave its echoes undisturbed to be the last that occupy your ears. After so much that is fearful and appalling, I will leave the thoughts it suggests to soothe, revive, and animate your hearts; to win you to Him who would rather be known in love than in terror, and who still defers the hour of His coming only that He may multiply the hosts of His redeemed; to remind you that there is a blood of the covenant which still appeals from Christ the Judge to Christ the Sacrifice, and renders even divine vengeance itself innocuous, since to reach the repentant sinner, it must brave the meek omnipotence of the Lamb of God. Such blessed evidence of love unspeakable are still the weapons He prefers in the conquest of our affections; it is by the recollection of such marvels of mercy He would attract us to see in His appearing the advent of one who, if mighty to avenge, is yet mightier to save,—to rejoice in a power which a love more glorious than even that power shall direct and govern to our happiness,—and thence from heart and soul to echo the prayer with which, as if to bind them both for ever in our thoughts, the volume that records the FIRST Advent closes, anticipating, desiring, beseeching the SECOND: “Even so, *come, Lord Jesus!*”

SERMON II.

THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY INCARNATION.

(Preached on Christmas-Day.)

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.—
LUKE i. 35.

THERE is a very deep and very wonderful connexion between the relations of our Lord Christ to his Father and to us. In heaven, and from all eternity, He has been a Son, “the only begotten of the Father;” on earth He became the Son of the Father again, and by a new title,—“*therefore*, that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,”—He being by the same wondrous act the Son also of an earthly parent. By His resurrection from the dead He acquired another, a third title to divine Sonship; as St Paul seems to explain the matter in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, applying to the resurrection of Christ the declaration of the second Psalm,—“Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee;” confirmed by a similar application in Heb. v. 5. Now in all these three forms and grounds of divine Sonship we are interested. In the *first*, because, doubtless, it is the eternal model and type upon which all other spiritual filiations were primarily formed and designed. It is one of the ways in which we are made like to God, imitators of Deity, “partakers of a divine nature,” that we should be thus bound to God, even as the Second

Person of the Trinity to the First. Nay, probably, since the family relationship itself is unquestionably a pure and holy thing, it was originally created as a sensible image of that ineffable relationship of the everlasting Father and Son; a perpetual picture in time of that great fact in eternity. Instead of supposing, as speculators often do, that the words, as applied to the divine persons, are a mere metaphor derived from the earthly relation, why not rather conceive that the earthly relation was *itself* created to be the counterpart, and symbol, and memorial of the heavenly? And possibly too, the apostolic polity of the Church, with its paternal, filial, fraternal relations, may have had some similar ground deeper than we can fathom; may have been intended to reproduce in that "new earth," which is the Church, another perpetuated image and symbol of the same eternal connection;—a supposition which may chance to appear less fanciful when you remember in what peril that great doctrine of the Father and the Son has ever been of corruption or extinction, in almost every religious community where the apostolic polity has been rejected. With the *second*,—the Sonship by Incarnation,—we are yet more deeply concerned, because it laid the foundation (whether as designed from everlasting or at length realized in the fulness of time) of all filial relation between God and man, being itself the conduit that connects deity and its graces with humanity and its weakness; the source, cause, and principle of every divine blessing whatsoever. And with the *third*,—the Sonship of Christ by Resurrection,—we are again more intimately connected than even with the last; for with this we have a real and direct, though most mysterious communion, in that twofold regeneration (for to both the same name is instructively given) of which we are made the possessors and the heirs; the regeneration of the soul in this life, and that of the body in the life to come; both of which are expressly said to make us "the sons of God," because the one only completes and consummates

the other; and in both of which we are “the children of God, being the children of the *resurrection*,”—of a resurrection which is now spiritual (risen with Christ), and which shall hereafter combine spirit and body together. And hence it is that St Paul (Rom. viii.) makes that future resurrection “a manifestation of the *sons* of God,” an unveiling and public recognition of their sonship; and hence, too, it is that in the one supernatural gift he finds the source of both the blessings. “If *the Spirit* of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you.” The Spirit which gives the adoption here is the germ of the Spirit which gives the resurrection hereafter: and the resurrection itself is but the adoption made visible in glory.

You see, then, how deeply, in every form of His divine relationship, we are interested in “the Son of God;” how in *His* generation we see our regeneration; and how, in this sense no “jealous God,” He would make us sharers of all His own unspeakable privileges, and teach us not even to dread the awful glory of reposing in that “bosom of the Father,” where He himself from all eternity has dwelt.

But of all these ways and titles of Sonship, doubtless the most wondrous is that which made Christ at once the Son of God and the Son of Man; the Sonship of this great festival. The eternal generation of the Word of God is too wholly beyond our comprehension to be matter of real amazement. It is a fact in a sphere of being that utterly overpasses our conjectures. All colors are alike to the blind, and all suppositions as to the substantial nature and essence of God are, apart from revelation, equally possible or impossible to us. On the other hand, the resurrection, marvellous as it is, is easily conceivable when once the deity of Him who rose is granted. But the INCARNATION of God, the conjunction of divine and human, is just sufficiently within our capacity (for we do know one member

of the connection) to let us feel how infinitely it also transcends it. It is the mystery of mysteries, the wonder of heaven and earth, each alike astonished at the union of both, the one everlasting miracle of divine power and love.

In such a subject as this, what can one say which is not unworthy of it? It were vain to try amplification or ornament of such things as these. This matter is far vaster than our vastest conception, infinitely grander than our loftiest; yet overpoweringly awful as it is, how familiarity still reconciles us to hearing of it without awe! Perhaps even the overpowering greatness of the subject makes us despair of conceiving it at all. All the wonders of God fall deadly on unfitted minds. And thus men learn listlessly to hear words without even an effort to attach ideas to them; and this is not least the case with those who dispute the most bitterly about the lifeless words themselves. In such a case, all that can be done is to endeavor to devise some mode of meeting this miserable influence of habit, by forcing the mind to make some faint effort to realize the infinite magnificence of the subject. Let us endeavor, then, to approach it thus.

You are wandering (I will suppose) in some of the wretched retreats of poverty, upon some mission of business or charity. Perplexed and wearied amid its varieties of misery, you chance to come upon an individual whose conversation and mien attract and surprise you. Your attention enkindled by the gracious benevolence of the stranger's manner, you inquire, and the astounding fact reveals itself, that in this lone and miserable scene you have by some strange conjuncture, met with one of the great lights of the age, one belonging to a different and distant sphere, one of the leaders of universal opinion, on whom your thoughts had long been busied, and whom you had for years desired to see. The singular accident of an interview so unexpected fills and agitates your mind. You form a thousand theories as to what strange cause could

have brought him *there*. You recall how he spoke and looked; you call it an epoch in your life to have witnessed so startling an occurrence, to have beheld one so distinguished in a scene so much out of all possibility of anticipation. And this, even though he were in nowise apparently connected with it except as witnessing and compassionating its groups of misery.

Yet again, something more wonderful than this is easily conceivable. Upon the same stage of wretchedness a loftier personage may be imagined. In the wild revolutions of fortune even monarchs have been wanderers. Suppose this, then—improbable indeed, but not impossible surely. And then what feelings of respectful pity, of deep and earnest interest, would thrill your frame, as you contemplated such a one cast down from all that earth can minister of luxury and power, from the head of councils and of armies, to seek a home with the homeless, to share the bread of destitution, and feed on the charity of the scornful. How the depths of human nature are stirred by such events! how they find an echo in the recesses of our hearts, these terrible espousals of majesty and misery.

But this will not suffice. There are beings within the mind's easy conception, that far overpass the glories of the statesman and the monarch of our earth. Men of even no extreme ardor of fancy, when once instructed as to the vastness of our universe, have yearned to know of the life and intelligence that animate and that guide those distant regions of creation which science has so abundantly and so wonderfully revealed; and have dared to dream of the communications that might subsist—and that may yet in another state of existence subsist—with the beings of such spheres. Conceive, then, no longer the mighty of our world in this strange union with misery and degradation, but the presiding spirit of one of these orbs; or multiply his power, and make him the deputed governor, the vicegerent angel, of a million of those orbs that are spread in

their myriads through infinity. Think what it would be to be permitted to hold high converse with such a delegate of heaven as this; to find this lord of a million worlds the actual inhabitant of our own; to see him and yet live; to learn the secrets of his immense administration, and hear of forms of being of which men can now have no more conception than the insect living on a leaf has of the forest that surrounds him. Still more, to find in this being an interest, a real interest in the affairs of our little corner of the universe; of that earthly cell which in point of fact is absolutely invisible from the nearest fixed star that sparkles in the heavens above us. Nay, to find him willing to throw aside his glorious toils of empire, in order to meditate our welfare, and dwell among us for a time. This surely would be wondrous, appalling, and yet transporting; such as that, when it had passed away, life would seem to have nothing more it could offer compared to the being blessed with such an intercourse.

And now mark,—behind all the visible scenery of nature; beyond all the systems of all the stars; around this whole universe, and through the infinity of infinite space itself; from all eternity and to all eternity; there lives a Being; compared to whom that mighty spirit just described, with his empire of a million suns, is infinitely less than to you is the minutest mote that floats in the sunbeam.

There is a Being in whose breath lives the whole immense of worlds, who with the faintest wish could blot them all from existence, and who, after they had all vanished away like a dream, would remain, filling the whole tremendous solitude they left, as unimpaired in all the fulness of His might, as when He first scattered them around Him to be the flaming beacons of His glory. With Him, co-infinite with immensity, coeval with eternity, the universe is a span, its duration a moment. Hear His voice attesting His own eternal sovereignty: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." But *who* is

He that thus builds the throne of His glory upon the ruins of earth and heaven; who is He that thus triumphs over a perishing universe, Himself alone eternal and impassible? The child of a Jewish woman, brethren; He who, as on this day, was laid in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn at Bethlehem!

Such is the Incarnation of the Son of God; such is the event that astounds the angels who have no part in it; while men, its subjects, can hear it with less interest than the fable of a romance. And consider that in all our previous suppositions there was but outward humiliation, a contact with degradation which still left the internal nature unaltered. But the Lord of heaven and earth blended our nature with His own; He took the manhood into God. He bound us up with Himself as one invisible being; He shared not only our state, but our nature and essence; He took from us a human nature that He might give us a divine. And remember further, that this mystery of the God and Man is a mystery for everlasting. As there ever has been, and ever will be, the eternal Son of God, so will there ever remain the eternal Son of Man. This blessed union is incapable of dissolution; our immortality is suspended on its continuance; we could not have life eternal unless God were to be man eternal. The first fruits will remain with the rest of the harvest in glory. Yes: for evermore shall the ransomed of Zion behold their own bright model in heaven, and grow more divine as they behold. He will still, as man and God, be the link that connects them with the Father; this poor humanity for which He suffered so bitterly He loves too deeply to part with it. It is said that mothers love with most tenderness the child for whom they have suffered most; the agonies of the Eternal endured in our behalf have attached Him for ever to our world and our nature. That nature He retains for ever. *From* it, quickened by the divinity, proceed mysterious influences (those which He calls the gift of His body and

Blood) to His militant Church below; *with* it He pleads before the Father, when through the Cross He would gain forgiveness for your repented sins and infirmities; *in* it He will rule for ever, dispensing the terms of His judgment and treasures of His love.

But this is a day upon which too much remains to be done, and that the most blessed portion of our Christian service, for me to detain you unduly. The Lord Himself, I trust, will be spiritually with you just now in those holy mysteries which He has committed to His servants to dispense to His children; and by which, as the Church instructs you in her exhortation, "eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood, you dwell in Christ and Christ in you, you are one with Christ and Christ with you." But to such a service, springing as it does essentially out of the incarnation of the Lord (for none could "eat His flesh and drink His blood," till He had taken upon Him flesh and blood,—to such a service it is most appropriate to ask you, ere you join in it, How feel you towards this great fundamental truth, that Christ has become a man and a Saviour? Do you habitually realize the fact that your nature occupies this awful position of being borne by the eternal Son of God? that your human nature is the vesture in which this everlasting Priest is attired, the regal robe of this Almighty King? How shall men dare to sully a nature thus dignified, or make their own bodies unworthy to share in the flesh and blood of Christ? If *He* has thought your nature worthy of heaven, will you wilfully degrade it to hell? If He has carried it through all the courts on high, amid the wonder of angels, will you make it the habitation of unclean spirits,—of pride, impurity, envy, sloth? Oh, it is a mighty honor, but it is a terrible responsibility too, to have a brother who is the eternal Son of God! Oh, it is a fearful thing to think that we can never more disgrace our own nature without also disgracing His!—that every sin against ourselves is now an insult to Him who has identified Him-

self with us! When He, who would not take on Him the nature of angels, has taken into Himself our manhood as the pledge and earnest of its total purification, how terrible becomes the guilt of wilfully counterworking His merciful condescension, by debasing what He has designed to honor! Devils themselves are unable to reach this guilt, for they have never had an incarnate Redeemer; the Son of God has never been a Christ for them!

What feelings, too, are those which you bring to this *anniversary* of all these wonders; to the day and season which alone of all our festivals, is named from Christ Himself? This is ordinarily held to be a season for feasting and for joy; and there is a sense and degree in which it may well be such. In even a merely temporal view, there are feelings which no wise adviser would teach men wholly to suppress, that gather round this period; that are too closely connected with many of the best and most valuable qualities of man to be rudely censured. The reunion of families and friends, the renewal of old domestic ties, the very recollections of former anniversaries, fraught as they are with warnings,—even the preservation of ancient customs,—a matter of more importance than might at first sight appear, in an age like this, and connected with a temper which no Anglican Churchman can ever underrate,—all these are things which have their value, and which (considered in themselves) religion would mistake its office in undertaking indiscriminately to oppose. But remember that nearly all this men might have felt even in that *heathen* festival which is said to have preceded our Christian feast at this period of the year. There is a higher joy which befits the time as a Christian anniversary; a joy which springs from higher sources, and is maintained by higher prospects. To those who partially live in eternity Christmas is indeed a time of solemn rejoicing; a happy memorial to their thoughts of the great work of divine love; a remembrancer to faith and hope; and,—why should we

fear to say it?—to many such no unpleasing token, in the close of yet another year, of the rapid passing away of that period which still separates the suffering disciple from his glorified Lord. And hence, to the possessors of such spiritual consolations, the time is a time of humiliation too; the Christian, among all his comforts, cannot forget where his Lord was born, and to what life. The highest forms of Christian joy are ever inexpressibly mingled with humiliation; it is still, to the last, the joy of the Cross. Alas! as if to impress this lesson, the Church has followed the commemoration of the birth of our Lord with that of the death of His first martyr. Those are no right feelings of joy which can lead you, in the exulting sense of the riches of grace which are celebrated in the festival of the Incarnation, to forget the sorrows to which the Holy One of God became incarnate. And as one of the best and simplest particular lessons of the time,—even as Christ has for our sakes become poor, so for His should the poor be remembered. This is a time to remember the wants that surround you: to give liberally in imitation of Him who gave all. The Gospel of Christ sanctifies what custom has long sanctioned; that the poor in Christ have special claims at whatever period the humiliation of their Lord is remembered. In them He is present, and, as it were, in emblem still incarnate. He leaves them in the world to exercise your faith and love. When just now, in the mystic symbols, He shall bestow upon you who have faith to receive it the spiritual gift of his body and blood, giving back to you with new and quickening efficacy what He took originally from your nature,—remember this; feel for others as He felt for you; practise the lovely lesson He taught; and though all you can do have no intrinsic merit to purchase heaven, though it be only through that body now incorporated into the person of Christ, and in Him meritorious, you can be anywise acceptable to God,—yet through Him your Christmas

gifts of mercy to the poor will find favor with His Father. God will rejoice to see in you the faint but faithful copies of His Son. He will recompense you in that hour when a cup of cold water, given in the name of Christ, shall not be forgotten, or lose its eternal reward.

SERMON III.

THE DAILY SELF-DENIAL OF CHRIST.

(A Lenten Sermon.)

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—MATTHEW xvi. 24.

“THIS,” brethren, “is an hard saying; who can hear it?” You observe in what terms the Captain of our Salvation lays down the laws of His service; how, having been Himself a man of sorrows, He would attire His Church and people in the same uniform of woe. “Hereunto are ye called,” declares the same Peter who, on this occasion, when our text was spoken, would have saved Christ from being the model, as he afterwards, for a while, strove to save himself from being the copyist of shame and suffering; “Hereunto are ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.” In truth it *is* an “hard saying,” but in a different sense from that mysterious saying to which Christ’s hearers first applied the expression. The discourse at Capernaum was “hard” to the natural reason; *this* is hard to the natural temper and disposition. But so far from opposing the calm verdict of unprejudiced *reason*, it will, I believe, the more we reflect, be found the more perfectly to correspond to everything we can collect from the notices of reason, and the information of experience. The doctrine, I say, that man must ordinarily be made perfect through suffer-

ing; that affliction, in a greater or less measure of it, is—particular instances of exception apart—the great earthly instrument in the hand of God for bringing the spirits of men into subjection to the Father of spirits; that a course of uninterrupted prosperity is, in its very nature, adverse to the inward principle of religion, and, therefore, requires to be tempered by extraordinary prudence and secret self-denial; this I conceive, to be not only the universal voice of Scripture, but clearly demonstrable to every one who will patiently attend to the lessons of common experience, and the workings of his own heart within him.

When, however, we speak thus of affliction, and suffering, and self-denial, as requisite to the formation of the Christian character, it is right, in order to prevent doubts and misconstructions, to say that the terms are employed in a wide sense. I do not mean to assert, that direct persecution is essential to holiness; the saints can be bred only in sight of the dungeon and the stake; or even that overwhelming earthly reverses are necessary to form the man of God. The thing required is *self-denial*, and it may be exercised in many, —in all spheres of life. The thing required is not momentary, or the result of anything momentary; it is a constant and habitual temper, and hence in St Luke's record of this discourse, the taking of the cross is declared to be "daily." The cross is a large and comprehensive word, but with whatever variety applied to individuals, it cannot lose its essential nature; it still carries the nails that pierced the body, and the shame that penetrates the soul. Wherever it rises upon the page of Scripture, it cannot but bring with it the shadow of pain and trouble; wherever it is planted, whatever be the celestial consolations, surely the daily world can no longer be the pleasant land it was of old. Wherever it is erected, surely as at first there will be "darkness over all the *earth*," even though that darkness may make the stars of heaven shine more brightly. The thing imported in this daily cross is

self-denial, and with self-denial the uneasy murmurs of the self that is denied, with self-denial more or less of pain;—of pain that has many alleviations, trouble that may gradually decrease as patience grows to the consummation of her “perfect work,” and the stamp of God is deeper impressed upon the soul, but that in few cases can ever be expected wholly to cease, and that no earnest pilgrim of Zion should ever wish to wholly cease. Think of all the fettered but impatient vices, the tolerated imperfections, the residues of old follies, the rash impulses of even the better nature, the self-deceits, the masked and plausible weaknesses—benevolence becoming lethargic under the name of retirement, or ambitious under the title of zeal—the self-excusing, the concealed reluctancies, that beset even the holiest among us; and you will incline to pronounce that, where life is but too short for discipline, we ought not to covet too much repose before the grave. Circumstantially the cross may vary, but its purpose is the same in all; and that purpose our Lord has here, with great precision, assigned. When the Apostles had to exhort and console, they spoke of direct and pressing *persecution* as the characteristic of the cross which they had themselves to sustain, and to induce others to sustain. Christ, with (as became Him) a master grasp of all the coming ages of the Church, went back upon the universal principle, and spoke of *self-denial*,—self-denial that applies with equal force to every age, rank, and position of human life.

Thus, to take the ordinary state of Christians,—which always must be the most important practical one,—the law of life here intended will be chiefly evidenced in such characteristics as these (always reserving a *readiness* for any of the more searching trials of Christian firmness, which few can expect to be very long without, in some form, experiencing); a subdued, strict, and patient temper, the produce, or the progressive growth of the “overcoming” power of faith, realizing the invisible, and filled with the

awe of a present God ; a constant and zealous watchfulness over the peculiar occasions of temptation belonging to one's station ; an avoidance of all exaggerated excitements, as being, however seductive, wholly unsuited to the healthy state of the Christian mind, which is eminently "sober:" in short, that tenderness of conscience and habitual humbleness of spirit, which seems so touchingly expressed by the Hebrew idiom of "walking softly." It is thus, perhaps, that one would describe the spirit of Gospel self-denial in the average condition of human life. In prosperity and adversity, new characters of the same spirit emerge. The resolute servant of Christ is marked, in great worldly *prosperity*, by a deliberate refusal of high earthly enjoyments ; by a constant consciousness of that exceeding peril of his position, of which his Master has spoken so awfully (Matt. xix. 24) ; by a purposed counteraction of the cruel kindness of fortune in large charities and earnest internal mortification. In extreme *adversity*, it is given to such an one to welcome it as the appointed instrument of discipline,—“the schoolmaster to bring him to Christ;” to measure love by chastisement, and see the deepest tenderness in the severest trial ; to find, in the cross itself, a sad unearthly joy ; and in praying, “thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,” to make earth, by the power of such resignation, in some degree the heaven that he prays it may imitate !

There is one case which I think of importance enough to be specially mentioned, as an exception to the Christian's avoidance of all unusual degrees of *excitement* ; it is that in which some perilous temptation has required to be met,—as it ever ought, if possible,—by a sudden change of scene and state. In this case, it may be a point of Christian prudence to introduce occupations somewhat more stimulant than the usual average,—in the first place, to *engage the imagination*, which too often perpetuates old temptations on a new scene, and in a form even more peril-

ously attractive; in the next place, to prevent, after the sudden vacuum of engrossing thoughts, the dangerous *collapse* of melancholy and despair. This is exactly analogous to the use of stimulants in medicine, and is, like that, an exception to the general course of regimen, always presupposing a disordered state of the spiritual patient. The few who have wisdom and firmness enough to prosecute through life the great work of self-improvement will value hints of this kind, which indeed are disregarded only because we live from day to day, as it were, by chance; and forget that human life itself is as much an Art, governed by its own rules and precepts of perfection, as the most complicated profession by which that life is maintained or adorned.

But we must consider more specially the substance of the passage before us. The command it contains is based upon the great principle of the imitation of Christ; unlike all other legislators (for who but He could dare it?) His *life* is the Law of His people.

If we would gain the root of the matter, then, we must contemplate suffering as manifested in Christ Himself; and in Him behold the archetype of that sanctified and sanctifying sorrow, of which His mourning saints attempt to present their scattered images. Let Peter himself and his fellow-saints be seen in their Master. If there be healing in these bitter waters, let us analyze them in the freshness of their fountain; from it the streams derive every precious quality they possess.

On this occasion, then, I shall speak of the Master; the disciples are but His likeness. To-day we shall examine the movements of the Leader in this march of the cross; the followers may see themselves in Him. That you may not forget the relation of the subject to yourselves, I have briefly told you how you are to bear this banner of your profession; but I have told it only briefly, because I would for the present engage you principally with its relation to

Christ. I speak then of the daily self-denial of the Son of God, which is here set forth as the model of ours, for it is only as we understand the model that we can expect to understand the copy. The subject may require a little attention, but none can more abundantly reward it.

The everlasting God of heaven and earth was Himself a mourner! The Author of light, life, and happiness has Himself wept real tears! Amazing fact,—which familiarity alone can deprive of unspeakable wonder! Let us endeavor to escape the lulling effect of that familiarity by approaching the subject from its principles, and thus gradually gaining some conception of the marvellousness of its nature, when first presented to a mind properly prepared to receive it.

The ultimate facts of the Bible and of the Reason (for the Bible is but the perfection of Reason) are the existence in God's universe of Good and Evil, with Happiness and Misery as belonging respectively to each. *Under* these all-grasping titles we may class everything; but once arrived *at* them we can go no further. We can neither explain them in the world, nor can we explain them away from it; we can neither unravel them nor remove them. There they are, certain but impenetrable;—"high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" But though we cannot tell all about them, though we cannot "pluck out the *heart* of their mystery," yet by the light of Scripture and of Reason, we can gather a good deal of their mutual bearings and relations. We can see that while they are utter and irreconcilable antagonists, they are, in a marvellous manner, connected and reciprocally operative, the darker element of evil and misery ministering in a wondrous way to the brighter principle of good; a plain proof, I may observe, against those Manichean notions of rival principles of equal dignity, once so prevalent as an admitted heresy, and still, I fear, floating unacknowledged in many an embittered mind, as the prac-

tical creed of disappointment and impenitence. The more we reflect, the more clearly we come to see that the reins of empire are really held by a single sovereign, who, blessed be His august name! is assuredly engaged on the side of moral purity and happiness. But being such, no doubt He must hate and reject, from the inmost depths of His everlasting nature, that accursed principle, which, by the voluntary agency of certain of His rebellious creatures (perverting the freedom of action which was given to make their worship worthy of His throne), has been so long intruded upon His fair creation; He must abhor it alike in itself and in that gloomy retinue of misery which, by inevitable necessity, has entered with it, and with it forever dwells.

Yet what is the great primary fact upon which all the essential peculiarities of our religion are founded? That God,—this same being,—became strangely, inconceivably connected with pain; that this being, whose nature is inherent happiness, by some mysterious process entered the regions of suffering; crossed the whole diameter of existence to bind Himself with His own opposite; bore, though incapable of moral pollution, the dark shadow of pollution; even anguish unspeakable; and though unsubdued by the master, Sin, exhibited Himself, to the wonder of the universe, clad in the weeds of the servant, Death.

The main reason of this extraordinary fact is, as you all know, to be found in the necessity of atonement. Indeed, if an atonement were necessary, and for that we must trust the express warrant of Scripture, we know not *where* the vicarious victim was to be sought, without insuperable objections on the score of justice and of goodness, except in the offended Judge Himself. Our atonement appears to demand, from the very nature of the case, a Person not less than divine. And thus, hidden in the depths of justice and mercy, is found the solution of this astonishing coalition of glory and of woe. Essential happiness thus embraces essential misery, because the God of happiness is also the

God at once of infinite purity and infinite love. We first start aside at the impossibility; we gaze longer and deeper, and the conviction slowly rises that it could not be otherwise, and God be what He is. The sacrifice, strange as it is, is but the natural growth of this being; it is but the child of eternal mercy wedded to eternal truth; and *their* spousal home is in the heart of God. Hence it is that the Life and Happiness of the universe, in its love at once of justice and of us, comes, through the medium of the inferior nature, in direct contact with misery and death. But into this part of the subject I am not now about to enter. It is not with Christ as He is the divine sacrifice of His own divine justice that I am now mainly to engage you. I bring before you this divine person visiting the regions of pain in such a sense as to be our *example*; for so the text presents Him. I exhibit Him, as *it* does, suffering as He would have us suffer; suffering, therefore, that He may accomplish a refining and exalting change upon Himself; not then upon Himself simply as God, for as such change and exaltation are alike impossible, but upon Himself as man, and, therefore, susceptible of all the improvement which the original principles of that part of the creation will allow. It is of the fiery trial I would speak, through which He bore *our* nature, till He had, Himself the sufferer, made it fit to be the shrine of a God, the temple in which He has chosen to dwell for everlasting. Christ the Atoner we acknowledge and adore; but it is before Christ the Purifier we bend to-day.

That this purifying purpose in the sufferings of Christ is recognized in the scriptural accounts of His redemption of our race, I suppose I need not remind you. The "refiner's fire" was itself refined; Himself He perfected to perfect us. He is everywhere described as being ever *tempted*, just as we are, though ever victorious, as,—alas!—we are not; nor can we doubt the disciplinary character of this constant and painful struggle, when we are told that,

“though a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered,” that He was “made perfect through sufferings,” and by that means “became the author of eternal salvation to all of them that obey Him.” Everywhere His trial is made accurately to answer to our own; nor surely can we, with any reason, doubt that its result upon His own humanity must have been similar to that which we know the same processes produce, and are intended to produce, among ourselves. We find Him immersed in the same difficulties, supported by the same faith, acting in view of the same reward, “in all things made like unto His brethren;” and we know that His human nature was capable of the natural course of advancement, that He could “*grow in wisdom*” and in years, we may well believe that even in Christ Himself those vigils of prayer so often recorded, those weary wanderings, those patient “endurances of contradiction,” the agonies of the garden, the final struggle of the cross, had power to raise and refine the human element of His being beyond the simple purity of its original innocence; that, though ever and equally “without sin” the dying Christ was something more consummate still than the Christ baptized in Jordan.

This proceeds upon the broad principle, that virtue tried and triumphant ranks above innocence: and this once clearly apprehended, you will see, that if Christ was to possess (as, surely, was on every account fitting) the utmost *perfection* of our nature in the humanity allied to His Godhead, it was necessary that He should possess it in the state of *victorious trial*. It may, indeed, be objected that this state of exaltation could have been wrought by some *sudden and supernatural illapse of grace*. We may, it is true, conceive such a thing; but only because we may conceive anything not positively self-contradictory. In voluntarily assuming the nature of man, Christ was not, surely, to destroy all analogy between Himself and the whole race of man. In coming to exemplify holiness, He was not to

render all resemblance impossible between the original and the copy. In becoming "the first-born among many brethren," He was not to annul every real tie of brotherhood between Himself and His family of younger mourners. Sin alone excepted, the Son of man was still to be one with the sons of men. It is not too much to say, that a perfection thus struck out at a beat by the instantaneous omnipotence of miracle, would have formed a sort of manhood so utterly removed from our own, that it would have neutralized nearly every single discernible purpose of Him who, in the fulness of an all-pervading sympathy with man as such, "took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham."

A different form of objection may perhaps float through the minds of some of my hearers. It may seem a derogation to the *dignity* of Christ to suppose Him capable of moral advancement. But you will remember that all these reasonings apply only to the inferior nature, to that nature in which every humiliating characteristic (if this be, indeed, one) is but a new testimony to the boundless love that brought its Creator to assume it. It is no more an impeachment to the dignity of Christ that as a man He should have been capable of improvement, than that as a man He should not be infinite.

But in what respects may this constant struggle against temptation, this daily burden of the cross, this deliberate assumption of poverty and pain, have contributed to exalt the sinless humanity of Christ to a nobler maturity of perfection?

Now, when suffering is considered simply as occurring in the resistance to all urgent temptation, or as affording the materials of a special temptation to discontent and impatience, you can at once understand its utility as a *discipline of the will* to unreserved obedience. It is thus to us, it was thus assuredly to "the man Christ Jesus." In this sense, as in the more ordinary one, we may say with

truth it was "His meat and drink to do His Father's will;" because the practice of doing His father's will nourished and fortified His moral nature,—that is, the strength of His holy resolve,—to more consummate vigor. And for such a purpose it might be shown that suffering is naturally indispensable; insomuch that it is well nigh impossible to conceive the human will educated to high perfection without it. This alone, if followed out, would exhibit sufficient reason why the Restorer of Man should willingly adopt the position of a harassed and afflicted wanderer; why He, who was to carry to heaven a perfect humanity, should condescend to derive its perfection through this particular channel. This alone would evince that, even had salvation been possible without sacrifice or atonement, yet "to deny Himself" was requisite on the part of the blessed representative of our race, if He came to present the model of its highest excellence, and if that excellence consist in the intensity of its resolve to work the will of God. It was not wonderful, before the Christian Revelation, that men should have anticipated nothing of all this; but it *is* very wonderful, with the light which that revelation gives, and is by themselves admitted to give, as to the position of man and the purposes of his Redeemer, that objectors, instead of murmuring at it as an impossibility, should not see it to be inherently *necessary* that the friend of man should be "a man of sorrows;" that had He entered the world as heir to the throne of the Cæsars, or to raise another to rival it, His whole life, in relation to its professed object, had been an inexplicable contradiction.

This concerns painful self-denial as connected with *temptation*; and no doubt this is its chief occasion, and the purpose I have just stated its principal object. But beyond this necessary exercise of difficult obedience, the self-denial of Christ may be regarded as embracing His entire preference of an afflicted life, His voluntary assumption of sorrow as such. For I entertain no doubt, that even apart from

the necessity of trial, the life of humiliation was the life of His choice. And the same spirit breathes through the whole of the religion He founded.

For I suppose it may be said with truth, that if any man were to be asked, what it is that characterizes Christianity as a practical system distinguishably from all that preceded it, or from all that have followed without imitating it, he might state it correctly enough in two words,—*love* and *sorrow*; the blessedness of mutual affection, and the blessedness of suffering. Of course I do not forget that occasional notices, nay, elaborate treatises, upon subjects *akin* to these, are to be found among heathen writers. I speak of the prominence given them, the peculiar and quite inimitable way in which they are described and enforced, the importance assigned to them in the formation of character, the proportion they bear to the rest of the system, so great that I believe nearly two-thirds of the New Testament, and of those parts of the Old which predict and reflect the evangelical spirit, will be found directly or indirectly concerned with them both, whether considered separately or intertwined in the exhortation to loving sympathy with the affliction of others. In Christ Himself, who is His own religion alive and in action, they seem, like rainbow colors, evermore blended and lost in each other; He is the immortal image of both; love and pain are the footprints by which we trace Him from page to page. And who shall say *which* was foremost on Calvary? Love drew the god-head of Christ from its throne; sorrow,—sanctifying sorrow,—lifted the manhood into meetness to share it!

Must we not, then, think that there is something in this sorrow, thus cordially and perpetually chosen by our Master, that is eminently adapted to elevate and purify our being? Is it not probable that, not indeed *all* sorrow, but sorrow borne with resignation, may have some more direct effect than the one we have already noticed, upon the entire frame and temper of the human heart? Must there not be

something divinely excellent in that which was deliberately chosen by a divine nature as its peculiar tabernacle, out of all the world afforded,—the sad but awful “*cloud above the mercy-seat*” in which, while among us, His glory was to dwell?

This special excellence is not hard to discover. HUMBLENESS OF SPIRIT, the most pervading and universal of all graces, is in the Christian code the very essence of perfection; and sorrow borne with resignation has a direct tendency to produce it. Grief, if it can be looked upon as inflicted by the hand of God, forms a perpetual memorial of subjection, a daily, hourly remembrancer of dependency. Nor, though it may fail, and too often does fail to produce this effect, is it easy to conceive what could supply its place. Now because our Redeemer knew, what it is so hard to persuade even his avowed followers, that in this direction lies the true perfection of man,—that a gentle, unmurmuring submissiveness is his truest, brightest heroism,—therefore did He, in His own person, adopt the way that leads to it. He voluntarily mourned, because mourning humiliates, and He would be humble; He daily suffered, because suffering subdues the pride of human hearts, and He would teach us to accomplish that conquest. It was the humiliation of a God to take our nature at all; it was the humiliation of a man to crucify that nature daily. He knew, what sages had failed to see, that it was loftiest when lowest; that as it sank in humbleness it rose in glory. And thus the model of all He taught, Himself “the first-born from the dead,” He soared to heaven with a spirit lowly as the grave he left; thus beats there, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, a human heart,—the heart of an enthroned king,—more softly subdued to mercy, more meekly patient, than ever sorrowed among the loneliest solitudes of earthly affliction! And thus the daily cross *could discipline the will*, the daily cross *could humble the spirit*; these things are the *real* perfection of man, and therefore in these garments of

woe the humanity of God was voluntarily shrouded. Such considerations appear to offer some solution of the fact, they help us to gain some conception of its grounds; and yet, when once more from the reason I turn to the reality, from the supposed causes to the recorded effect,—I own it, —I feel so astonished, so overwhelmed, that it seems as if we had made no progress at all, as if we were far as ever from understanding it, as if it was impiety to dream we could measure our poor faculties with its unfathomable depth!

Thus, brethren, the leader bore His daily cross; we have dared to imagine *why*; but even though we never could conjecture His reason, let us delight to copy His act. If through the cross, not justifying alone but sanctifying also, we must be cleansed unto meetness for the kingdom, may we welcome the cross, yea, pray that it may come, and clasp it joyfully when it comes. If by affliction only we can be softened, boldly let us hope that affliction may be ours; that “our way may be hedged up with thorns,” if so we may return;” that we may be “borne through the fire,” if so we may be brought to “call upon His name,” and “say the Lord is our God.” I said I would speak only of Christ; you see the word was vain; we cannot speak of Him and not of His, for they are one. He chose the cross; have *you* assumed yours? Tremble for your own state if you have never known what it is to bear it! What mockery of the faith is this which gives us all of religion but the trial, which exhibits the Master in hourly tribulation, yet would have His people clothed in soft raiment! as if sanctification were vicarious as well as atonement, and in bearing all our sins He bore all our sufferings also! If God,—severely kind,—has not afflicted you, learn in some way to afflict *yourselves*. If prosperous, tax your prosperity for the poorer members of Christ. Allay the fever of fleshly will by mortification, of ambitious desires by purpose and resolute self-abasement. Exercise your hearts in a loving sympathy

with sorrow in every form ; soothe it, minister to it, succor it, revere it. It is a relic of Christ in the world, an image of the great Sufferer, a shadow of the cross. It is a holy and a venerable thing. Have ever before you the houseless wanderer of Galilee ; remember that God is richer and mightier than you, and yet that, when he would take your nature, it was in poverty, and pain, and persecution, He chose it !

SERMON IV.

CRUCIFYING THE SON OF GOD AFRESH.

(Preached on Good Friday.)

They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.—HEB. vi. 6.

VARIOUS as have been God's dealings with the world, brethren, there is, after all, a terrible impartiality in His dispensations to His rational creatures. Wherever men possess reason and conscience, they possess, in some measure, the means of pleasing or displeasing Him; whenever they can, in the lowest degree, conceive His law, they are bound to obey it. He can hear us all in the same court, and judge us out of the same books. He can see through the intricacies of His own diversified government. He can estimate every district and age of the world by the standards appropriate to each. And as He contemplates the vast prospect, Christian and Heathen,—as He beholds in the one division those to whom Christ was hidden, but who would perhaps have "received him gladly," in the other those to whom Christ was revealed, but who despised and neglected the revelation,—He doubtless can bring men to a level, balancing their opportunities against their actions, to a degree wholly unattainable by our weak and perplexed vision. The whole world is under a moral government, though we alone are in a written covenant; all live to God, though we alone have professed "the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The very temptations that dazzle the

unevangelized world are, in innumerable instances, the same temptations that are trying us,—anger, sensuality, ambition, avarice. We are their brethren in all things except in the revelation of the divine mercy and the gift of the divine Spirit. God grant that, in the day of wrath, too many of us, now luxuriating in our spiritual privileges, may not have reason to wish that our lot *had* been cast in the Indians' unevangelized wilderness, that the apology of ignorance *had* been ours, that we never had been cursed with a knowledge which only eventuated to aggravate our condemnation!

And as, notwithstanding all the vantage and prerogative of the Church of Christ, this sort of secret equity is preserved in God's arrangements of the relation between His Church and the world, so, doubtless, there is something not unlike it in His arrangements of the ages and provinces of the Church itself. While the human nature of the Church is uniform, its trials must be nearly so. As the Lord of the Church is the same "yesterday and to-day and for ever," so the probation He enforces is distributed pretty evenly through all ages and classes. We may be well assured that we endure little which our forefathers have not endured, that we are spared little which they have suffered. If we are not asked to perish at the stake in one terrific trial of faith and fortitude, we *are* summoned to a life of hourly self-denial. If we are not nailed to a cross with one Apostle, we *are*, with every disciple of Christ, bound to carry a cross daily. Temptation seems to expire in one region of the soul, but it is to start to fresh vitality in another. If licentiousness ceases to be the cherished vice of an age, it retires to make way for hypocrisy. If ferocious revenge becomes discountenanced, it is succeeded by thoughtless and effeminate ease. The enemy of souls is a master of all the resources of his art, the arsenal of Satan is never empty of weapons. Yet in *kind*,—such are the necessary limits of human nature,—they cannot admit of much diversity; the

wonder is, after all, that man can be destroyed on so small a stock of passions! In our crimes we are evermore the copyists of ourselves or of others. The very same frailty is seen to manifest itself in many distinct forms;—sometimes in religious errors that, superficially different, coincide in their sources; sometimes (which is still more lamentable) in those unhappy follies of Christian people which make religion too often present only an ungraceful caricature of the world. And thus mankind reiterate themselves from age to age, from country to country; the heart goes through the same narrow circle of follies in a thousand spheres; each generation is the poor echo of its predecessor. Alas! the dear-bought experience of the Church of Christ has not brought its members wisdom; the story of trial and victory written in the blood of martyrs has not taught us prudence. With whole libraries of records that tell us how the chosen few among our fathers fought and won the heavenly conflict, we begin as infants,—inexperienced, feeble, irresolute,—the easy prey of every commonplace illusion, vanquished by the novelty of seductions which were old in the days of Peter, and John, and Paul.

Thus temptations may vary outwardly; but while the human nature on which they operate remains unchanged, they must be found in substance much the same. But of all the equalizations of evil in successive ages, of all the repetitions of trial from generation to generation, of all the instances evincing that, in the Church as in the world, “the thing that has been will be,”—unquestionably that expressed in the text is the most startling and fearful. The CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST, in its literal reality, stands alone in the history of man. It was the last and darkest depth of human criminality. The original fall, and the rejection of the Redeemer, are the two saddest pages in the story of our race. But mournful as is the former, it has never, probably, left the impression upon the heart which is at once produced by all those dread accompaniments

that prepared and embittered the last sufferings of the meek and merciful friend of man. He had been only known as the dispenser of unpurchasable blessings, as a man patient of suffering beyond the experience of living men, prompt to sacrifice every guiltless comfort to the slightest wish of those around Him, rejoicing with every innocent joy, and weeping with all who wept. His unbounded powers had ever been at the service of humble affliction. No one had ever dared to breathe calumny against the profound purity of His life. None like Him had ever united abhorrence of the sin with love and pardon for the returning sinner. In claiming to be the Messiah of prophecy He disturbed no temporal throne; in claiming to be the Messiah of the heart He but asked, one would think, what no generous spirit could refuse. Such a Being as this was among us to die a death of violence; men framed like you and me destroyed Him. As if to mark the event as the uttermost point of human crime, Providence seems to have permitted it to gather to itself a tribute from almost every evil passion of our miserable nature. Designed to atone for all guilt, almost all guilt was called out to accomplish it. Injustice, cruelty, false shame, unworthy indolence, covetousness, ambition, hypocrisy, envy,—all were in different ways exhibited in this tremendous tragedy; all contributed in different ways to fix the catastrophe. No, never, surely, is man, in all the possibilities of futurity, destined again to consummate a wickedness like this. It must be forever solitary in the world, an event placed beyond anticipation, repetition, or parallel; a lonely and terrible monument of unapproachable guilt.

Not thus, however, speaks the voice of inspiration. Heaven has *not* spared us this trial. When Christ was about to die He instituted a memorial sacrament of His passion, to show forth His death until He come. It would seem that there is, as it were, a fearful and Satanic sacrament too, of that same dread hour, by which it is still in

man's power to reiterate and prolong His death until He come to judge the long succession of His crucifiers. St Paul delivers to us the tremendous truth, that there is in man a continued capacity of "crucifying afresh the Son of God;" a power to act over again all the scene of his torture, to league with the malignant priests and the scoffing soldiers, to buffet the unresisting cheek, to bind the crown of thorns.

You will be mistaken if you think this matter can be *dismissed* under the cold and vague criticism which pronounces it a merely figurative illustration intended to heighten the coloring of a vivid description. It is not thus that the deep sayings of the Holy Ghost are to be treated. Believe me the Apostles do not descend to the artifices of popular rhetoric. The proposition before us is of too momentous import to have been ever intended for the secondary or accidental purpose here imagined. Such a declaration as this, if it were not in *some* sense literally true, would have been misplaced and exaggerated to a degree not to be admitted by any reverential interpreter of the word of God.

It must, indeed, be conceded, that the crime to which St Paul specially ascribes this fearful character is a peculiar one, and, in its full extent, not ordinarily exemplified. He speaks of deliberate *apostasy* from the faith of Jesus. But there is no one characteristic of direct and utter apostasy which does not, in its own degree, belong to those daily desertions of the cause of Jesus which ally the miserable votaries of the God of this world with the avowed enemies of Christ in every age. There are the apostasies of the social table, of the fireside and the market-place, the refined apostasies of our own modern and daily life, as real as the imperial treachery of a Julian, or the cold-blooded abandonment of a Demas. To every one of these the same impress belongs; it may be branded more or less deeply, but it is branded on all; they are all alike rife with the spirit

of Caiaphas's council-chamber, they are all echoes of the voice that cried aloud, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Do you doubt this, my brethren? Is it too severe a charge, too oppressive a thought to entertain? You are not pleased with the ruthless allegation, so needlessly, unjustly, intemperately stern. It is scarcely *fair* that a Christian minister should seize the advantage of his position to load his fellow-servants with so heavy a denunciation. Far from the possibility of such unspeakable disloyalty, you have often thought, as you mused over the mournful narrative that precedes the triumphant close of the Gospels, that you would gladly resign the whole world to have had but the opportunity of standing beside that cross with the Virgin Mother and St John; of raising your voices boldly against the murderers; of avowing with all the energy of indignant justice, that you would be no partners in their wickedness; of dying, if necessary, under their blows in behalf of the suffering innocence that writhed and bled before them. "What! crucify Jesus, my Lord and my God! The rightful sovereign of my heart, the meek and majestic sufferer whom no man need have been commanded to adore, for no single-hearted man could ever have heard or seen Him without the instinctive adoration of devoted love! Crucify *Him*? No; bring me to the trial, place me in the judgment-hall of Pilate, or in front of the accursed tree; let me look but once upon my Saviour's face, and I will tear that wreath of thorns from his dishonored brow, and bend in worship of my insulted Lord before them all!"

Alas! we cannot do this for you. The test, perhaps in mercy, is impracticable. But there is a test we *can* apply. Will you honestly abide it? Pass from imaginary suppositions to attainable facts, from what you *might* do if you but were as you never can be, to what you *are* doing in the position where God has placed you. Reflect on the frame and temper of mind, on the weakness and the wickedness,

that made the chosen people of God the murderers of His Son, and try if you cannot catch some faint image of that treachery in your own hearts. But be true to yourselves if you would indeed detect the lurking evil, and think not that even among the *best* of us, in a world of oft-recurring temptation, it is useless to prosecute the scrutiny. Doubtless the accuracy of the image will vary in degree: here, through progressive sanctification, all but obliterated; here, through remaining worldliness, vivid and undeniable; here, through total rejection of Christ, all but complete. To those whom God has taught and guided by His own deep Spirit, these reasonings may be little applicable; *they* may be enabled to feel themselves truly one with Christ in His humiliation and His sufferings; they may be given to know, by the blessed experience of an "overcome world," that their faith is indeed competent to stand a fiery trial. Yet, even they,—if any such rare and blessed spirits be before me,—can find it a cause of holy vigilance to be thus urged to examine themselves yet more and more, and a cause of delighted gratitude to feel that, if there be cowardice, and indifference, and treason all around them, their God has reserved them from the miseries and condemnation of such a state.

Erect then the cross of Christ in the centre of His baptized Church, even as it stood of old on Calvary! The Son of God has borne it, He stands beside it, as on that dark day. A word may save Him the coming ignominy, but will the people speak it? They gather around him with eager eyes. No topic engages their thoughts or inquiries but Him and His fate. His name is on every lip. While they thus congregate to this new crucifixion, we may stand aside and contemplate the throng.

To estimate the resemblance we must turn to the original. When Christ was, in that day of mingled horror and glory, sacrificed on Calvary, few things were more remarkable in the accessories of the event than the feelings and motives

of the *people*. Christ was unquestionably *a favorite* with the mass of the people; the great obstacle to the schemes of the priests was always that "they feared the people." His gracious bearing, and the mysterious anticipation that surrounded and dignified His singular life, had evidently caught and conciliated the popular mind. Nor was it unqualified malignity that made them His persecutors. Christ Himself had found a palliation for this crime in their ignorance, He besought forgiveness for them because "they *knew not* what they did." Yet, however it came to pass, this people, thus disposed, are found the unanimous destroyers of their Prophet, the tumultuous petitioners for His crucifixion, the fierce invokers of His blood on them and on their children!

Strange as this appears, is there indeed nothing that resembles it in our own experience? Is no parallel to be found for it in the Christian world around us? Can we not, when we go abroad into the highways of daily life, find something in the general mind that reminds us of a people honoring Christ as long as He offers easy blessings, flocking round His standard with enthusiasm so long as He is made the standard-bearer of a party, professing boundless admiration, devotion, and love; yet when the true hour of trial comes, and the question can no longer be escaped,—Shall we surrender our pleasures or our Redeemer?—give up the favor of earthly superiors or the favor of the King of Heaven?—abandon our cherished sins, or with our sins nail Jesus to the cross once more?—*then*, relinquishing their short-lived discipleship, following the instigation of blind and guilty guides, turning with the turning tide, and swelling the torrent of the persecutors of the Body of Christ.

Turn again to the record. Among the unhappy instruments of Satan, on that dread occasion, was one whose name, almost unknown in all else, his relation to this event has miserably immortalized—the wretched, wavering, timorous Pilate. Willing to save, but afraid to resist, anxious

to do right as long as virtue cost no trouble,—has *this* crucifier of Christ no image among us? Are there no Pilates among our grave and reputable men of business?—none who could be models of consummate piety if there were no danger of its disturbing their tenure of wealth and influence?—who would gladly save the Son of God from degradation if they were not a little apprehensive of degrading themselves in the task,—and would allow Him supreme authority as long as their own was warranted secure? Compounders between earth and heaven, who would have the best of this life and the life to come,—it is not to *such* that Christ will intrust the maintenance of His honor on earth. Well He knows that a single pressing trial must infallibly determine the hesitating heart to easy evil; that the crowd have but to threaten discontent, the powerful to hint impeachment, and the Pilate of daily life will hand over his Lord to the torturers.

Not far removed from this is the case of those rulers who struggled against their very faith lest it should hazard their popularity. “Among the chief rulers,” says St John, “many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Alas! these poor dependents on human fame stand not alone in the world; this weapon of the evil one has not been suffered to rust in disuse! False shame operated against confession, of course, in all ranks, but it was among “the chief rulers” that it is here eminently recorded to have wrought, and the fact is instructive. It is among the higher orders that the verdict of society becomes of such tremendous moment,—heavy enough to outweigh every other consideration, vague and vast enough to hide God and *His* judgment altogether from our view. What is peculiarly dangerous about this influence is the insidiousness of its advances. It is not with open disavowal that the votary of fashionable worldliness disclaims the Lord of

glory. A peril such as this might be met and warded off. But society does its work surely because slowly. Religion is not proved to be absurd, but *assumed* to be so; the world would not harshly ask us to disbelieve in Christ, but merely to forget Him. Principles are lost for ever before we have dreamed they were in danger, and the poor victim of the world's opinion has learned to "crucify afresh the Son of God," without relinquishing one outward characteristic of discipleship!

But these, wretched and criminal as they are, are but the less daring forms of crime. Deeper guilt than this bore the suffering Lamb of God to His cross, and deeper guilt than this is not confined to His first crucifiers. Can *we* witness nothing that recalls the rebellious ambition of those who said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours?" The world at large,—yea, the far immense of worlds,—is the inalienable property of God; the inheritance is entailed upon that only-begotten Son "whom," it is written, "He appointed Heir of all things." And when, refusing to hold as His lessees, spurning His rights of lordship, we would explode His claims for antiquated and fanciful, that we may enjoy His gift as though the fee were ours; in all this is there none of that spirit which once raged in those who, in angry impatience of His claims, "took counsel against Him for to put Him to death?" And when a paltry hope of gain or advancement can bribe us to forsake a gracious Master, to forget all He has done, and all He has borne; does *he* remain then alone in the world who "said unto the chief priests, What will ye *give* me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" Nay, at such an hour, we are worse than Judas; for even Judas, the miserable suicide of remorse, we may believe, had another option been his, would not have "crucified the Son of God *afresh!*"

Can we descend yet deeper? Christ was crucified on the imputation of *blasphemy*. "He hath spoken blasphemy;

behold now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." What was the "blasphemy?" He had called Himself the Son of God, and the Son of Man, and in right of this transcendent union, the Judge to come "in the clouds of heaven," and "sitting at the right hand of power." If this was *false*, his crucifiers were justified; if this was false, in a theocratic government, He deserved His fate. There are those who pronounce that mysterious title false in any sense that could have ever made it "blasphemy" from human lips, who deny the Sonship of the Eternal any significance beyond what more or less belongs to all the virtuous revealers and interpreters of the will of heaven that have ever instructed man. Surely we cannot in justice refuse to such impugnors the place they have chosen for themselves in the throng that circled the cross of Jesus!

Still we have not sunk to the last level of the Jewish persecutors. Fallen as we are, we could not have borne to prefer *Barabbas*, the thief and murderer, to our pure and guiltless Redeemer. And who, then, are the darling idols of human applause? Who are the chosen of our race that poetry crowns with its halo of glory, and every young imagination bows to worship? Who, but the laurelled *Barabbases* of history, the chartered robbers and homicides that stain its pages with blood, and that, after eighteen hundred years of Christian discipline, the world has not yet risen to discountenancing? Remove the conventional discredit that attaches to the weaker thief, exalt him to the majesty of the military despot, and how many would vote for *Barabbas*, how many linger with the lowly Jesus?

"Be it so, but our votes would at least be open and undisguised, we would not stoop to the meanness of hypocrisy. We would not, with those you are pleased to make our prototypes, 'put on Him the scarlet robe and the crown, and the sceptre,' that we might 'bow the knee and mock Him.' Of *this*, at least, we are incapable." Perhaps

so. I pray God it may be so. And yet, recall but the hour that has just now floated past you into eternity, when you "bowed the knee" to this same Jesus who was crucified, when your lips uttered words of piercing sorrow, and besought His mercy and implored His aid, as erring and straying sheep, as miserable offenders, miserable sinners. Ask yourselves how many knees were bowed in the repentance the lips rehearsed, how many hearts were melted in the agony the tongue so readily expressed. And if conscience whisper an accusation, bethink you how differs *this* from the guilt of those who called Him King and despised the royalty they ascribed; or was it more a crime to insult Him when He walked the earth in 'poverty and pain, than when he sits, as now, the recognized monarch of the universe!

Such a monarch is He, and in such glory enthroned. And yet, with all the splendor that surrounds Him, doubtless He does feel in some unimaginable way for our sorrows, and does lament our sins. Infinitely happy He is indeed; but we do not know what elements may be mingled without destroying celestial happiness. That He rejoices in our triumphs is certain; how can this be if He regret not our lapses? And when the Apostle tells us that wilful rejection of Christ can still in some sense perpetuate His shame, who shall dare to set accurate limits to these awful revelations? Think, then, were it possible to renew in all its literal horrors the degradation and insult of Calvary, to act the scene of ignominy before assembled heaven, to drag the everlasting King from His throne amid the wondering and weeping angels,—think if each deliberate sin were again to disgrace Him as He was disgraced before,—who among us could endure, under any force of temptation, to risk such atrocious guilt? Yet, if there be truth in Scripture, such guilt, or a guilt like this, is in effect yours, when, taught to approach a covenanted God in Christ, you turn with contempt from Him who loved

and bought you. You see it, brethren! the tragedy of Golgotha has many actors; every generation, every land reiterates these multiplied crucifixions. Be assured that the man who rejects Christ now, when He is formally recognized by high and noble, would have been *much more* certain to have joined in crucifying Him in Judea. The Pharisees boasted, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets;" and having so spoken, they proceeded to murder the Lord and Inspirer of prophets. May God in mercy enable all of us, who have not deeply weighed this most awful matter, at length to lay it to heart. May He fulfil to us what He has promised by His prophet to our unhappy ancestors in crime, the "spirit of grace and of supplication," that we may learn to "look upon Him whom *we* have pierced." So, and so only, shall we escape being of those "kindreds of the earth" that shall "wail because of Him," when He shall "come with clouds, and every eye shall see Him; and *they also which pierced Him,*" the crucifiers of every age and nation, shall shrink in horror and dread before the blaze of His advent glory! Oh, brethren in Christ! in that fearful hour how happy, beyond all that thought can conceive or words declare, for those who, familiar with the cross, can look upon it not as the symbol of the sorrow and shame they have willingly inflicted, but as the symbol of sufferings in which they were willingly united *with* their Master, with Him crucified, that they may be with Him glorified, His blessed associates in the bliss unspeakable of His own immortal kingdom.

SERMON V.

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION.

(Preached on Easter Day.)

In Christ shall all be made alive.—1 COR. xv. 22.

IT is one chief advantage of that regular course of festivals by which the Church fosters the piety of her children, that they tend to preserve a due proportion and equilibrium in our religious views. We have all a tendency, according to our several constitutions, and the circumstances of our peculiar position in life, to adopt partial views of Christian truth; to insulate certain doctrines from their natural accompaniments; and to call our favorite fragment the Gospel. We hold a few texts so near our eyes that they hide all the rest of the Bible. Whatever we cannot at once refer to our chosen centre seems insignificant; whatever we can, seems important only in that connection. Nor does it always mend the matter, that it should really be a very cardinal tenet we thus exclusively espouse. It may indeed be better to lose the exterior limbs than the inner and vital organs of the frame. But we know of how little practical use or comfort,—nay, how impossible to preserve,—would be these vital organs without limbs to animate, and by which in turn they might be supplied with tributary nourishment and support. Now the Church festival system ministers a perpetual corrective to this tendency; and hence, not improbably, one cause of

its general unpopularity with all those sects that have been so unfortunate as to abandon the primitive balance of doctrine. It will not let us isolate our chosen facts and favorite tenets. It spreads the Gospel history in all its fulness across the whole surface of the sacred year. It is a sort of chronological creed, which forces us, whether we will or no, by the very revolution of times and seasons, to give its proper place and dignity to every separate article. "Day unto day uttereth speech;" and the tone of each holy anniversary is distinct and decisive. Thus our festival year is a bulwark of orthodoxy as real as our confessions of faith. It is a perpetual image or moving panorama of the truth "whole and undefiled." It will not allow caprice or perversity to distort or to suppress. It will not suffer guilty or precipitate men to rob the precious story of one single glorious element; but sets our whole goodly treasure in due succession before us, that of all which He hath given us we may lose none. Well might the prophet mourn as the darkest indication of divine vengeance upon desolated Judah,—well might we mourn, if the short-sightedness of weak men had ever been permitted to succeed in similarly desolating us;—"The Lord hath taken away His tabernacle, He hath destroyed His places of the assembly; the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion."—Lam. ii. 6.

These thoughts naturally arise when we pass from day to day in this portion of the year, so thronged with solemn commemorations that suggest their respective doctrines. When one reflects upon the weight and vastness of each, it is indeed no wonder that each should fill the whole horizon of thought; that frail imperfect men, left to their own speculations, should tend to seize every one his own, and strive to build a Christianity upon it; that "what God hath joined together" men should thus be prone "to put asunder;" that, in short, nearly all honest error should spring from this infatuation of arbitrary selection where

all is equally revealed. But surely we ought thence to acknowledge how inestimable becomes any influence that tends, silently and unsuspectedly, to insinuate a remedy, and maintain, in our wavering uncertain thoughts, the integrity of divine truth.

Take, for example, the subject of your reflections two days¹ since, and the theme of your praises to-day. In some men's scheme of religion, the Crucifixion of Christ seems to absorb every other doctrine into itself; to stand alone, as in its own depths embodying all that men ought or can conceive of the Gospel. To others the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, the visible triumph over the grave, is almost solely worthy of a place among fundamental beliefs; all beyond that and its consequences is practically subordinate, —secondary,—unimportant. But the Church, by the series of her celebrations, forces these theorists, in despite of themselves, to come forth from their narrow cells, and walk in the full daylight of consummate truth. She assigns its due honors to each. She does more than this, for she proclaims that either is shorn of its glory unless seen in the light of the other. The depths of the first day are measured by the heights of the third. She adores the agony because the resurrection proves who He was that agonized; she adores the resurrection because the agony attests how He loved that rose. She may divide them in conception, but she combines them in act. They are one atoning work; inseparable correlatives; perfect only in union. And hence she will not let us pause too long even at the grave of the Saviour. She will not permit even a holy sorrow to be unchecked. She wills not that we still seek the living among the dead, but startles our dream of grief with that angel's trumpet-tone,—“Ye seek Jesus the crucified. He is not here; He is risen!”

The results of the exclusive views of which I have

¹ Good Friday.

spoken upon personal piety, are, of course, a partial and imperfect sanctification. For the *life* of the believer in Christ must be the living transcript of his *faith*. Those who lose all in the Crucifixion are at home in Gethsemane and Calvary, but strangers to Olivet and Tabor. Their hearts, cold and depressed by the undivided subject of their thoughts, find in religion only the everlasting discipline of a loveless penitence;—"darkness is over the face of the earth," and heaven has but a faint and distant star-light to compensate it. Their very sabbaths are Good Fridays; their joy the hope of future delivery, not the bright and cheering sense of present freedom. Others in the same imperfect belief, possessing a nature more cheerful and elastic, are liable to yet deeper perils. They are confident without resolute obedience or active love. Failing to remember that dead with Christ they are also risen with Him, they forget that the very essence of His salvation is salvation into the new obedience of the adopted child of God. Seeing in the death of Christ the full satisfaction for sin, they are tempted almost to pervert the satisfaction into a license, the easy security of worldliness, indifference, and sloth. Such are the dangers of those who habitually dwell on only the former half of the redeeming work of Christ. But is it better when we contemplate the exclusive votaries of the other,—those who lose the sorrows in the victory of the Redeemer? *They* rejoice indeed in the proof which the Resurrection of Christ furnishes, of the similar exaltation of the virtuous and holy. They see in it the title to an inheritance of power and of glory for man. But of the humiliation He demands as requisite for the holiness He gives and the glory He promises, their conceptions are inadequate and feeble. Often they speak of the high perfection of the Saint, his superiority to the world, his enjoyments and his hopes; but they will not see that such perfection is only to be attained in the deep and humbling consciousness of sin and weakness,—that, to be indeed "risen with Christ," we must have

“died with Christ,” and learned the lesson of abasement at the foot of the Cross. You will not accept either of these fragmentary Gospels. You will not rend the seamless garment which was meant to cover in its ample folds every true want and wish of our regenerate nature. You will see in the one mighty event the ground of humiliation, in the other of joy; and, blending that humiliation and joy in one blessed mood, will come to know what is that state, wrought out of faith and hope, yet greater than either, which it is the object of the Gospel to work in Man,—that lowliness which, prostrate in the dust, yet lives in heaven,—which, lost to itself, is found in Christ,—that “love,” or utter abandonment of self for God and for the brethren in God, which beareth all, believeth all, hopeth all, endureth all,—which is all graces in one and one grace through all, but which, springing as it essentially does from our union with Christ, rests, in even its loftiest forms, for its whole support, upon the two eternal foundations,—which yet are not two but one,—that He which rose had died, and He that died rose again!

But the mystery of Love and the mystery of Power, though thus inseparable as one redeeming act and thence both for ever blended in one baptism into Christ, may, of course, be thought of successively even as they were wrought successively; and so the Church intends in her yearly image of the story of Christ. It is, I repeat, this very division which insures that no one element of the truth shall be mutilated or forgotten. To-day we would not have you forget the Cross, we know you cannot understand the motives of your own joy without it; but we would more eminently lead you to contemplate the Crown and the Triumph.

You are, then, to see in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead the proof of His own power over Death; you are to see in it the everlasting proof and pledge of your own immortality; you are first to contemplate the Lord Himself

as in His own flesh, the personal Conqueror of Death; and then,—as, even during His earthly humiliation, exhibiting that power as capable of extension to the resurrection of others; and again,—as after His ascension,—quickenng the dead world into a living Church by an incessant work of spiritual revival, which is but another and higher form of the same gift and energy; and finally, as combining both in the universal resurrection of body and spirit at the last day.

I. The Resurrection of Christ is the great public manifestation of His authority over the power of physical decay and death. This it is by being *His own* personal conquest of that power as it had been exercised upon Himself; a characteristic which separates it from all other instances of similar miraculous restorations. All others, in whatsoever age of the world, had been raised by a power from without; He alone by Himself. The power that revived all stands self-revived. This is indeed to “quicken whom He will;” this is indeed to “have life in Himself.” But the case is even more pre-eminent in another view. In all other instances Death had but touched the verge of God’s real empire, and been at His pleasure repelled; here the rebel had stormed the citadel, and planted his dark standard in its inmost hold. That which is the very principle of vitality to the whole world had seemed to wither in his grasp upon the Cross; when majestically rose the unvanquished Lord of Life, and hurled him back and for ever to darkness. The resurrection of the dust of a thousand ages to the Judgment, wondrous as it shall be, cannot approach to this. The dead who then shall live, shall live by a power exerted in all the fulness of visible and irresistible authority; it will be but the act of a known and recognized Creator, not perhaps as truly wonderful as a thousand natural processes that surround us every hour. But the dead Christ, who lived again, was prostrate under His enemy the hour He overwhelmed him; the conqueror was chained and bleeding

beneath the foe He destroyed. As a man truly dead, He was inextinguishably alive as God.

And in this view it may be instructive to notice the strange inconsistency of the Socinian heresy. The views popular with its unhappy followers, it is too well known, are usually materialist;—that is, they are prone to believe that that which is called the spiritual essence in man is the pure result of bodily organization, and, disappearing out of existence with the dissolution of the body, shall live again only by the re-creation of that body at the Judgment. Now as it is certain that Christ emphatically ascribed to Himself a power of *self-resurrection*, it may be asked how this important fact is to be explained on these principles. What was that which raised Christ from the dead? It was not the soul; for this being, as they tell us, a bodily attribute, was of course dead with the rest of the body, awaiting, not giving life. It was no diviner principle inherent in Christ, for this they will not admit Him to have ever possessed. Palpably the fact of self-resurrection is inconceivable on such a scheme; plainly, either man has a spirit distinct from the body and surviving it, or Christ was more than man.

II. But as the self-resurrection of Christ stands alone as a monument of His inherent power of life, so He has everywhere intimated that this is exercised with a view to the beings He came to redeem. That this connection might be clearly apprehended,—that it might never be said that this great reviver of the dead could only pour the stream of life into His own frame, and possessed no energy diffusive through all mankind,—He has, in visible proofs, manifested it both before and after His own resurrection. I do not know that it has been observed, that there seems a sort of progressive scale¹ of these resurrections noted in the Gospel

¹ The celebrated Homily of St Augustine, “On the three dead Persons raised by Christ” (Hom. XLVIII, Luke vii.) which contains a very *similar* line of thought, could not have been overlooked. St Augustine, however,

history. The daughter of Jairus was "even now dead," but not yet removed from her chamber; "the dead man, the only son of his mother," the widow of Nain, was already "carried out" to burial when the Lord touched the bier; Lazarus was "four days" dead; the saints who arose after the Resurrection had long been dust and ashes:—the general resurrection yet to come is but a step beyond this. It was as if He would gradually prepare His followers for belief in His omnipotence; teaching them by a progressive discipline of miracles to anticipate the great marvel of all. And there is a remarkable distinction between those which preceded and succeeded the resurrection of Christ Himself. In the former the body still remained; passing rapidly into dissolution in the latest case (that of Lazarus), but not yet dissolved: in the latter, as if to manifest the fulness of triumph now obtained over the whole force of death, the returning spirits were those who came from far ages, and whose bodies had long before mouldered into nothingness. And lest we should undervalue the nature of the revival, we are expressly told that on *these bodies* it was wrought;—"Many *bodies* of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after His resurrection." There was here an accession of power to the Mediator; a supremacy unlimited by time or space was henceforth manifestly His. Here was the plain type of the universal resurrection. They who admit the one cannot doubt the equal possibility of the other. It was the designed token that no outward difficulty, however startling to our limited conceptions, could any longer resist the will of the risen Saviour; that all the might of Death was now and for ever crushed by that Almighty arm; that every particle of the living frame might be scattered on the winds, or even re-appear in new forms of being, and

represents these successive resurrections as typifying three classes of sinners restored from so many various degrees of *guilt*; while Mr Butler regards them as progressive developments of *Christ's power* as the resurrection and the life.—Ed.

yet a power existed that could recover the plundered spoils of Death, could re-embody the parted spirit, could restore it to all the fulness of its prerogatives as the quickening principle of an immortal frame. Still,—to preserve the progressive development of divine power,—you will perceive that something remains for faith. The *immortal* frame is promised, not exemplified. It has never been formed on earth save in the two great types of the patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations, Enoch and Elijah, and in their mighty antitype, the Lord Himself. The saints who rose at the Resurrection disappeared again from earth; we know not whither. For this last and highest exhibition of power, then, we must rely upon that promise which is surer than reason itself or experience.

Thus, then, we have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own person triumphant over death, diffuses through all His followers the fruits of His victory. His is no solitary glory. He conquered Death, not for Himself, for He is essentially above it, but for us, who are its helpless bondsmen. His victory is ours. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." This, we saw, He carefully exemplified during His whole life by public visible attestations,—growing in force and significance with each successive instance. These, however, are but the types and promises of power; the power itself, in the fulness of its exercise upon the universal family of man, was yet to come. And it *has* come. It is even now in its vigor; it hastens on to its eternal consummation. For even the universal resurrection shall be but the natural development of that which now works in the children of God.

III. The resurrection power has not, then, ceased after the departure of Christ; on the contrary, not till then was it adequately in action. His whole Church is the monument of its existence and its exercise. That Church is built upon His resurrection; nay, being mystically "His Body," it must equally be in the same mystical sense Him-

self risen and perpetuated among us. For there is a spiritual resurrection and there is a physical resurrection. The latter was wrought by Christ when on earth, as a visible symbol of the other, and a proof of His power to effect it; His own resurrection from the dead mysteriously exemplified both; the general resurrection of the just at the consummation of all things shall again and for ever combine them. That is to say, the body shall arise from death, and the spirit, already, during this life, "quickened together with Christ," shall carry it into the enjoyment and vision of God. Then, and not till then, shall the double office of Christ be completed. How these two things,—this present internal resurrection of grace, and the past and future resurrection of Christ and of us to glory,—are blended in the records of our faith, I need not tell you;—how we are said to be "risen with Christ" out of our baptismal burial with Him; how we are said, in "having the Son," to "have" already the life eternal that we anticipate; how the work of God "to us-ward who believe" is said to be "according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." Being thus *already risen*, every motion of grace is the struggle of the soul for the final consummation; the bird is caged, but the wings are free to flutter within their prison. The spirit of Him who believes and loves, already "made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," wearies of its dark and dead companion, that still is "of the earth, earthy." It longs for the period when the spiritual body shall minister to spiritual desires, and the whole man be perfected for God. Meanwhile, if the spiritual resurrection be as yet imperfect, it is not less real. The spiritual Lazarus is raised from the dead, though the fleshly frame, the grave-clothes of this world's charnel-house still encumber him, and the word has not yet been spoken, "*Loose him, and let him go!*" The resurrection of Christ, once performed in act, is immortal in energy; He rises again in every new-

born child of God. Every hour witnesses this incessant work of the new life He inspires; yea, He is now as active in the miracle of inward resurrection, as He shall yet be in the great day of the universal one. Wondrous as was His own rise from the grave, it is yet more wondrous, if that be possible, in its consequences than in itself. For, if you will believe the Scriptures, it is a work which transcends all limit of time or space. In the union of Christ with His faithful there is, as they tell us, a perpetual reiteration of all He did, even to the end of the world; He is for ever crucified in the self-denying, forever buried in the self-forgetting, for ever risen in the joyous freedman of God. And all this at once; Himself immutable:—even as the sun fixed in the central heaven, and without losing one beam of its own changeless glory, is at the same moment to one land the dawn, to another the morn, to others the noontide and the evening, as they catch or lose his beams. But as the Resurrection was the antecedent ground and proof of His power to build the kingdom of God upon earth, so is the continued work of resurrection His main function in building it. He spreads the mighty miracle of His own regeneration from the dead along the whole line of its history; He repeats it in every new member of the city of God; the Church's is an everlasting Easter!

Brethren, is this too mysterious for your apprehensions, —this truth that Christ should thus be evermore invisibly among us, working us into the transient image of His own sufferings, and unto the perfect image of His own glory? Oh, woe to those who will have a religion without mystery! Far from us be that miserable theology which would interpret the deep things of God by the standard of our poor and petty experience, and dare to measure His possibilities by what we can see and feel!—which would carefully fetter us by the chains of time and sense, when the object of all true faith is to struggle beyond them! Believe it, there *is* a bond deep as eternity, that binds you to your

God ; and that, if the sole true home of that God is heaven, in heaven even now are ye mystically likewise. Baptized into Christ's death and with Him risen, what but the body was thenceforward earthly? "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," ye want but faith to know the celestial world which encompasses you. Surely among you,—unbeheld, but, oh, how clearly and how lovingly beholding!—moves the same glorified Jesus whom the prophet in Patmos saw as He walked amid the golden lamps. Surely each poor disciple is dear to His heart as He notes the toils and the sorrows of each ; nor can they who have the first fruits of His Spirit long for the redemption of the body more earnestly, than He desires the blessed day when in His light they shall see light, "awaking in His likeness," and "satisfied!"

IV. For this, too, we must needs desire ; the final consummation of the resurrection work of Christ ; the restoration of an immortal body to an immortal soul. A word or two we must say of this, though briefly as the time demands.

This great tenet,—that "in Christ all are to be made alive" by an universal resurrection at the close of all things,—has had two classes of antagonists ; some of whom explain away the first words, and others openly reject the last. The former conceive that we depreciate the natural proofs of the soul's immortality by ascribing the resurrection to the *work of Christ* ; the latter that the resurrection of which we speak is itself absolutely and inherently impossible.

But it must be noted, that in attributing the future resurrection to Christ we in no wise affirm that the soul is naturally fitted to perish with the body. We do not even deny that in a being gifted with reason and conscience there are strong natural presumptions in favor of a future state. The amount of the argument antecedent to revelation is just this,—that no man can prove that the soul *must*

perish with the body, and that there are strong reasons for anticipating that it *may* survive it. But it will be remembered that the resurrection of the *body*, and, above all, of an *immortal* body, may still be the exclusive result of the work of Christ, as well as the *perpetuation* of the *soul* to immortality; for it does not readily appear that its mere survival after death would of itself, on any physical or moral ground, necessitate this. But, as a fuller reply,—it is perfectly conceivable (though many seem to have missed so simple a thought) that the soul of man may be naturally capacitated for immortality, and yet the work of Christ be absolutely necessary to bring that capacity into effect. The commonest facts of nature exhibit to us susceptibilities of growth and perfection, which yet are never realized without some further condition. Though the germ of life were in us, something beyond itself might be required to fertilize it. The criminal sentenced to die is capable of prolonged life; were he not thus capable, he could not live though reprieved; yet the arrival of the reprieve is, under the established laws, the necessary condition of his continued existence. And if any objector go farther, and venture the wild theory of the soul's *necessary* immortality, we may reply, that the same scheme of creation, which formed souls necessarily immortal, may have required the death and resurrection of Christ as the sole condition of forming them with this property of inherent and essential eternity. So that still, though existing by absolute necessity, in Christ alone could they thus exist. But I need scarcely remind you that the notion is itself absurd of any created thing existing for a single instant by any title but the will of its Creator; that all existence must be purely permissive but that of God; that nothing can be essentially eternal for the future, but that which has been eternal from the past.

The other class of objectors are those who pronounce the recovery of the earthly body, or any portion of it, in itself

impossible. It assumes, they say, new forms; it goes to the structure of other beings,—of plants, of animals, of men,—how then shall each frame be gathered back and appropriated to its owner?

Those who think this difficulty really unanswerable have but to conceive the resurrection body a totally *new* organization, and the objection at once disappears. But those who consider this solution an evasion of the Scripture doctrine, have merely to reflect, that the resurrection of the same body will only require that that *small portion* of the frame which is essential to existence at any period of our life (for the body, we know, is in incessant change) should be preserved for each individual, and attached to the separated spirit. The whole mass of material necessary for this purpose to all the past and future generations of mankind would be but a speck upon the surface of the globe. It would require a secret arrangement of Providence to prevent a confusion of the portions intended for each; but it cannot with any plausibility be pretended that the formation of a field of grass, which requires much the same accurate distribution of the particles of matter, is not a difficulty to the divine agent as insuperable as this. The simple fact is, that if we admit any intelligent contrivance to govern the minute processes of that physical creation, we must be forced to admit that the very thing we here pronounce impossible takes place in every moment's growth of every moss and flower at our feet. If there must be *some* reason why one particle is preferred to another in forming the animated frame of a human being, why may not *this* be a reason as well as any other conceivable?

I mention such objections as these, brethren, not that I suppose you to have been really disturbed by such cavils, but that I am too well aware that imagination, wayward on all subjects, is peculiarly intrusive and dangerous in everything that regards *this*. I trust and believe that your own hopes are fixed upon too firm a ground to be unset-

tled by any of these impatient questionings; that in a matter such as this you feel that if He alone can assure us, yet His word is assurance ample and sufficient, who came from the bosom of God to tell us the wondrous secret of our spiritual and bodily immortality. But this once believed, who *can* believe it, and not acknowledge that it alters the whole complexion of his existence; that he has sprung with one bound from dust to angels; that he stands on the great platform of immortal natures, can see below him the whole universe, above him nothing but his God? Shall we not then awake, and know ourselves the immortals that we are? This world is but the womb of eternity. The Father, who has regenerated, has regenerated that He may immortalize. Sooner shall he yield His heavenly throne than hold it and forsake us; sooner shall God be no longer God, than "the children of God" fail to be "the children of the resurrection." Behold! we stand alone in creation; earth, sea, and sky, can show nothing so awful as *we* are! The rooted hills shall flee before the fiery glance of the Almighty Judge; the mountains shall become dust, the ocean a vapor; the very stars of heaven shall fade and fall as the fig-tree casts her untimely fruit! yea, "heaven and earth shall pass away:" but the humblest, poorest, lowliest among us is born for undying life. Amid all the terrors of dissolving nature, the band of immortals shall stand before their Judge. He has made you to be sharers of His own eternity; the most incomprehensible of His attributes is permitted in its measure to be yours. Alone in a world of weak and fading forms,—with all perishable, even to the inmost folds of the fleshly garment that invests you,—with the very beauty of nature dependent on its revolutions, its order the order of successive evanescence, its constancy the constancy of change,—amid all this mournful scenery of death you alone are deathless. In the lapse of millions of ages hence, for aught we can tell, it may be the purpose of God that all this outward visible universe

shall gradually give place to some new creation ; that other planets shall circle other suns ; that unheard-of forms of animated existence shall crowd all the chambers of the sensitive universe with forms of life unlike all that we can dream ; that in slow progression the immense cycle of our present system of nature shall at length expire :—but even then no decay shall dare to touch the universe of souls. Even then there shall be memories in heaven that shall speak of their little speck of earthly existence as a well-remembered history ; yea, that shall anticipate millions of even such cycles as this, as not consuming even the first glorious minute of the everlasting day ! For these things ye are born ; unto this heritage are ye redeemed. Live, then, as citizens of the immortal empire. Let the impress of the eternal country be on your foreheads. Let the angels see that you know yourselves their fellows. Speak, think, and act, as beseems your high ancestry ; for your Father is in heaven, and the First-born of your brethren is on the throne of God. Oh ! as you read and hear of these things, strain your eyes beyond the walls of this dim prison, and catch the unearthly light of that spiritual world where the perfected Just are already awaiting your arrival. You go now to celebrate that on earth which is nearest heaven ; to receive the memorial and quickening presence of “ Him who was dead, and behold He liveth evermore.” You go, as it were, to kneel around the gate of Paradise, longing for the time when the portals shall uncloseth, yet humbly joyous that you are permitted even thus to wait. Oh ! may the Father feed you with the bread of heaven, which whoso eateth shall live for ever ; giving you life in giving you Him who is the true life ; and sowing in you that seed invisible and incorruptible, whose flower is the beauty of present holiness, whose fruit is immortal glory !

SERMON VI.

THE TRINITY DISCLOSED IN THE STRUCTURE OF ST JOHN'S WRITINGS.

(Preached on Trinity Sunday.)

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.—JOHN xx. 31.

IN these words the Apostle John declares the main object of his Gospel. His first and principal Epistle is stated to have been written with the same view, expressed in nearly the same words: "These things have I written unto you . . . that ye may believe on *the name of the Son of God*" (1 John v. 13). And in his other chief contribution to the volume of inspiration, his Book of Prophecy, where that Son of God Himself stands forward in his own awful personality, the similar purpose of the whole is scarcely less distinctly impressed. The one solemn proclamation begins in the first and ends in the last chapter, as though it were the key-note of the entire,—“I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last!”—marking the sameness of *His* eternal being and agency through the long succession of revolutions the book records, and in this brief expression of the divine omnipotence of the Messiah, drawing, as it were, the moral of it all. The SON OF GOD, then, His everlasting existence, His inherent dignity, His unbounded power,—the Son of God, implying in the term a nature which was one with God (for Christ Himself and the Jews,

uncontradicted by Christ, identified the claim of a divine Sonship with the claim of a divine nature¹),—the Son of God, in His high and peculiar relation as such, is the special subject which, in the dispensation of the Spirit, seems to have been eminently committed to the Evangelist St John. Through the other Gospels the Saviour moves in the mournful majesty of His humiliation; here, though there is much of humiliation, there is more of power: *they* love to enlarge on His blessed relations to earth; this Apostle, to proclaim his mightier relations to heaven. As we read St Matthew or St Luke we might at times forget that in the humble Teacher of Galilee we listen to the awful sharer of the divine eternity: with St John the manhood seems almost lost in the fulness of the God. While the Christ of his pages “speaks as never man spake,” we feel as if the words alone were human that clothe these divine thoughts, as if the veil of our adopted nature were all too feeble to hide the Deity that kindles into glory behind it. Jesus of Nazareth is the speaker, but the voice is charged with the echoes of eternity. The ear may catch the accents of a man, but the awed and fearful heart is listening to “the Word of God,” who is “with God” and “is God;” to “the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father;” to “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty!”

In this remarkable arrangement, which has made the last of the Evangelists the most explicit unfold of the whole mystery of Christ’s essential Godhead, we seem to see one of the instances of that law of progressive revelation which so strikingly marks the entire construction of the Bible. It was, perhaps, expedient that the Church at large should be trained by simple faith and the practice of His pure and beautiful morality into fitness for the more trans-

¹ John x. 33, 36.

cent truths which His higher discourses involved. She was first to be taught habits of dependence, humility, sincerity, and love; all presupposing, of course, a general knowledge of the facts of Christ's divine nature and earthly career, but resting, as yet, for their ordinary motive and habitual meditation, less upon the former than the latter division of this great mystery; and when thus practically versed in the life of faith, she was to rise into the more awful region of spiritual truth, to learn a profounder lesson in the story of that Being with whom we are so wondrously connected; to be taught the nature and depth of the communion we are entitled to hold through Him with the very source of life, to see at length the foundations of the Christian temple as they lie deep in the very nature of God, and to find every ordinary rule and maxim of the Faith assume a yet sublimer character when viewed as all springing from the tremendous truth, that He with whom we are one is yet more deeply one with God. And even though this master-truth had been taught as *frequently* as it is taught *really* and unequivocally by St Paul, we can easily conceive what new illumination must have brightened round it, when, in addition to the affirmations of His disciples, the discourses of the divine personage Himself were given to the Church; when his own claims were heard transcribed from His own lips, and introduced by the declaration,—the clear, simple, undeniable message of the Holy Ghost,—that the Word made flesh was no other than the very and eternal God.

But in thus revealing, in all its fulness, the twofold nature of Christ—in displaying Him (in the words of the text), as at once Jesus in His manhood, the Son of God in His deity, and Christ in his office which is the result of both,—other and wider truths are necessarily involved. The nature of Christ is a point from which a far-stretching view opens into the whole nature of God. This divine Son comes from heaven to reveal the will of a divine Father; and He

comes empowered and qualified by a divine Spirit. And thus St John, in being the preacher of the deity of the Son, becomes inclusively the preacher of the deity of the Father and the Holy Ghost. It will now be my object to exhibit to you the manner in which this great doctrine of the threefold God, with its practical relation to ourselves, forms the substance of the writings of St John; how they seem all framed in it as in a mould; how they perpetually suppose it, not alone directly (which to some minds would, perhaps, be less impressive), but silently, in their inmost structure, and in a way which could not be interpolated unless his whole writings be an interpolation; and thus to manifest the profound truth of the text, that "these things were" indeed "written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;" the Son of God, and thence Himself divine; the Christ, and thence the anointed of a divine Spirit.

We open, then, the GOSPEL of St John. It commences (as you all remember) with a solemn exposition of the divinity of the Word and *Son* of God, considered in His immediate relation to the deity of the *Father*, and as commissioned to represent His unapproachable glory in the world of time and sense. It is "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;" He is "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared Him." Here, then, are two persons of this mysterious conjunction; their distinct agency, their mutual relation. But in the influences of the second a new power is discovered, which all Scripture assigns to a *third* agent; "He hath given power to become the sons of God to them which are born of God;" the same gift which this Apostle elsewhere terms being "born of the Spirit," and another describes as involving "the Spirit of adoption." And thus, in this brief preface, the Father, the Word made flesh, the inworking Spirit proceeding from both, are shadowed before us;

the opening prologue presents a summary of the whole majestic drama which follows.

For, this being solemnly premised, the record itself begins. Now, the point I wish you to observe is, the distribution of the doctrine imparted through the rest of this Gospel; the very divisions of the subject recognizing the great fundamental truth on which we rest this day; and naturally arising in a mind previously impressed with this presiding idea.

The divine sovereignty of the Father being everywhere understood, Christ presents himself to enforce His own claims as the Son of God, through nearly the entire of twelve or thirteen successive chapters. *He* is now the prominent figure; His connection with the Father; His mysterious prerogatives thence arising; the power and glory of the kingship He inherently possesses as God, and has won to Himself as man;—these are the topics, with scarcely an exception (such as a few verses of the discourse with Nicodemus, where the alteration is plainly incidental), that engage the recording pen of the Evangelist. In the fifth and sixth chapters, more especially, Christ speaks in a tone of dignity which seems to centre in Himself the whole power of the Godhead. All seems (in comparison) to disappear from the scene except the Second Person, and His claims to unbounded fealty as the sole dispenser of every blessing from His Father to man. He alone is visible between us and heaven; in Him light, and life, and salvation; beyond Him clouds, and desolation, and darkness.

At length the hour arrives when He must leave the scene He had so long almost exclusively occupied. Accordingly, His prominence as the main object of the record gradually lessens; but exactly in proportion as it lessens, a new occupant fills the field of view. Christ, simply as Christ, is, in His turn, almost lost in the glory of “another Paraclete” who is “to abide” with the Church of God “for ever.” Thenceforth to the close of His teaching, it

is *this* Being who is the principal object disclosed to the spiritual anticipation. It is now not Christ who is "the truth," but "the Spirit of truth;" it is not Christ now who teacheth, but "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, He shall teach you all things;" it is not Christ now who testifieth, but "the Comforter shall testify of me;" it is not Christ now who reproveth the world, but "the Comforter," who "will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." In this portion of the book, exactly where the harmony of the doctrine would lead us to expect it, everything contributes to impress that *this* Being, working conjointly with the Father and the Son, is also to take rank with them as a distinct object of Christian knowledge and Christian devotion. And thus the threefold agency of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—of the Father made known in the Son, and with the Son operative in the Holy Spirit,—forms the common plan and directs the successive topics of the whole.

We saw how the opening verses presented all this, as it were, in miniature; let us contemplate it once more reproduced at the close. The entire exhibition of divine love, as wrought by the Father, Son, and Spirit, concludes with that sublime series of petitions which occupies the seventeenth chapter, and which, in the very objects for which it supplicates, paints the Church as its founder would have it in doctrine and in life. Now observe how this also recognizes in its internal structure, the same threefold division of operations. It opens—"Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee!"—and continues to represent before the throne of the Father the work of the Son as manifesting Him in the world to those whom the Father had given to be the subjects of this wondrous disclosure. Still the prayer is incomplete without another agency working for its own peculiar end; and hence, as the petition advances, the transition exactly parallel to that in the body of the Gospel, "*sanctify* them

through thy truth"...“for their sakes I *sanctify* myself, that they also might be *sanctified* through the truth:”—a form of expression which I need not tell you is (and in the original¹ much more emphatically) appropriated with almost technical regularity to the *Spirit* of holiness or sanctification. But it is fitting that this diversity of operations, which thus forms the subject of this Gospel, should be re-united before its succession of discourses is closed. And this, too, is done. Our Lord is engaged in prayer, in prayer for His Church; and, therefore, having to speak of the mystical bond that unites Him with His Father, He contemplates its image in the Church, and prays that that image may be clear, and vivid, and complete. (We, on the other hand, in beholding the image, rise to the divine original.) “That they all” (doubtless through “the fellowship of the Holy Ghost”) “may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: . . . that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” This, the transcendent oneness of the Father and Son above, in the unity of the same Spirit, with the implored oneness of the Church below, its earthly counterpart, and wrought by the same power, this forms the natural termination and summary of the entire.

Now I do not mean to affirm that such a distribution of the subject as this, though I think it undeniable as a fact, is of itself an unanswerable proof, or even a *direct* proof in any degree, that St John held the doctrine of the triple Godhead as we hold and preach it. But those who know the value of any addition to a cumulation of probabilities will not be inclined to dismiss it on that account; they will consider it only the more forcible in proportion as it is more indirect and circuitous. The question is, supposing St John to have held the doctrine, and to have

¹ Ἀγιάζω.

written, as the text affirms he did, to prove Christ the Son of God, whether this is not the very disposition of doctrine the subject would naturally have assumed under his hand; whether there is not discernible proof, even in what has been here offered, to show that some governing idea, which, whether he would have expressed it as we do or not, was substantially the same as ours, really presided over the whole scope and arrangement of his divine composition.

Any doubt as to the reality of the fact alleged will probably be removed by an appeal to the next of his writings in the order of the Canon, his first or Catholic EPISTLE.

Here, again, the Word of life and His manifestation of the invisible Father opens the treatise; and, as usual, the practical correlative of the doctrine follows, that "our fellowship is with the Father and the Son." The second and third chapters, so far as they are at all doctrinal, continue the theme. It is still, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son; whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." It is still, in practical application, as before in the opening of his Gospel, that we in Christ "are called the sons of God." It is still that "this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." But in a manner altogether remarkable, at the end of the third chapter a sudden transition is made, which is, more or less, preserved to the end: "hereby we know that He abideth in us, by *the Spirit* which He hath given us." "Beloved," he continues, "try the spirits whether they are of God." "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God." "We dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." The former subject is never suspended, indeed; but the leading topic, palpably, becomes the blessings and the evidences of this other agent, the work of Christ being

now regarded chiefly as it is the subject of the Spirit's teaching. For "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." If the text of the three witnesses in heaven be genuine (and it certainly ought to receive its measure of probability), I need scarcely observe with what admirable fitness it seems to recapitulate and embody the whole; but whether it be received or not, the main point is secured in the closing admonition of St John, where, expressly warning his "little children" to "keep themselves from idols," he yet unequivocally declares that this Jesus is "the true God and eternal life."

In this Epistle, then, it seems quite manifest (and I believe the more minutely you examine, the more clearly you will perceive the reality of this remarkable structure) that the order of the subject does by natural inward sequence proceed on the very distinction we recognize; that the signature of the threefold God is not merely wrought into spots and corners of the texture, but broadly impressed upon the whole web; in other words, that this Epistle and this Gospel are alike moulded as they would have been by an inspired Athanasius or Basil, in whose minds the body of Christian doctrine was habitually viewed under a Trinitarian distribution.

Of the other great work of St John, the Book of the REVELATION, I conceive that this same understood truth forms the framework, in a manner which not only discovers the doctrine of a triplicity of Persons, but does unanswerably demonstrate the author's belief that the Three are equally divine, mysteriously blended in the same unfathomable unity.

I say, then, that this Book of Revelation is in its main features nothing less than a history, a symbolical history of the TRINITY in its relation to the Church of Christ. The mysterious darkness of the prophecy cannot hide *the order and disposition* of the book, to which alone I appeal. Whatever in this wondrous record is obscure, this at least

is clear enough ; this at least, humbly and patiently meditated, may win the blessing its last chapter promises to him " who keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." I shall be brief and summary as the time demands.

At the very opening, and forming the significant introduction of the whole, the usual apostolic prayer of grace and peace is solemnly uttered in the name of the three divine Persons (i. 4, 5) ; and with a vision of the Three (as I shall presently observe) it closes. Omitting the second and third chapters, which detach from the main subject, the heavenly scenery opens in the fourth chapter, which you heard read this day, and which is one unbroken picture of the pure Deity ; the eternal Father made manifest in the eternal World, and operating (ver. 5) by the energies of the Holy Spirit. Hence the three adoring "holies" of the eighth verse ; and the declaration that the Being enthroned is one who "was, and is, and is to come" [the eternal Father, the abiding Spirit, the future Son of man in judgment.] In the next chapter (the fifth) a form altogether distinct in aspect is unveiled to adoration ; the throne is not, however, yet styled "His;" He is "in the midst of the throne," and His appearance is "a Lamb as it had been slain;" while the Holy Ghost (or "seven spirits" of the former vision) is now represented as the "seven eyes" of the Lamb ; thereby being shadowed the immediate re-issuing of this divine essence from the incarnate Son. This, then (as all will admit), is Christ Jesus after His sacrifice ; and in that capacity (ver. 8) the same beings who adored the pure Godhead in the preceding chapter are now in the very same words represented as adoring the Lamb ; before,—God for creation, now Christ for redemption,—the number of the worshippers being even increased (ver. 11), and the hymn loftier and more impassioned (ver. 12). At this point of the history "the Lamb" becomes alone the divine hero of the narrative ; and in order to particularize His achievements as such, He is purposely, through the body

of the record, detached from the pure Godhead: it is "salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb*;" it is a Lamb alone "upon Mount Sion." The human and mediatorial character is specially presented all through; because it is in that character specially that Christ's wonders in the Church are wrought. At length, after a long series of marvels, in the nineteenth chapter, as the closing fulfilment approaches its crisis, He meets us (ver. 13) as the "Word of God," the exclusive title of His divinity; as if to mark that the Godhead was again gaining the pre-eminence. In the twentieth, after having been for a while known as "Christ" (the blessed title which unites Him, through the mystery of mercy, in His double nature, to man), the grand consummation arrives,—the final judgment. One sits upon a great white throne, "from whose face the earth and heaven flee away;" Christ himself shall tell us who this is: "the Father hath committed all judgment *unto the Son*." After this event, in the world of purity and perfection that follows, a remarkable change of phrase is observable. There being no longer any need of separation between the characters of the pure Godhead and of the incarnate Christ, they are in every sentence united; they are given the same office, the same dignity, the same efficacy in sending the blessed influences of the Spirit. The throne is now "the throne of God and of the Lamb;" God and the Lamb are equally the light of heaven; God and the Lamb are equally its temple. But, which is peculiarly observable, before the majestic close of all in the unfathomable depths of eternity, an identification more absolute still is insinuated. To catch the force of this I must direct you to the beginning of the twenty-second chapter, and to the four verses that immediately follow it. In the first, God and the Lamb are enthroned in one dignity; and the efficacy of the Spirit, symbolized by the water of life that proceeds out of the throne, issues from a common throne to nourish and fertilize the tree of immor-

tality. In the third verse they are both again mentioned, but both identified; for the expressions, "His servants shall serve *Him*," "they shall see His face," &c., are manifestly referable to both as *one*. And in the fifth verse (which ends the entire, for the rest of the chapter is a mere epigraph of general exhortations and promises), "the Lamb," who had preserved His position all through, is omitted; He vanishes,—not *really*, for "He must reign for ever and ever,"—but He vanishes out of the vision, in order to represent Him as in a manner merged in the Godhead; "the Lord God" being now declared to effect alone that very blessing which "the Lord God and the Lamb" were to effect a few verses above (xxi. 23). And in this state the whole wondrous vision disappears into eternity! What shall we say, brethren? Is all this without a purport? Was all this arranged without any intended significance? Is not the whole series, and especially this most remarkable conclusion, an accurate representation of the entire awful mystery of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in those very characters which the Church presents to your adoring faith? First, alone in the eternal solitude of incommunicable glory; then separated, for the Son's incarnate work of redemption, a work of many ages; then, as it were, recombining after the mighty task has been completed, when God, as St Paul reveals, becomes once more "all in all," the mediator, subject, and the kingdom delivered up; God, as God, effusing a light neither of the sun nor of the moon, but of His own vitalizing Spirit, into the millions of worshipping saints around Him; "for *the Lord God* giveth them *light*, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

We have now reviewed the three chief writings of the Apostle John. We have seen how the great article of faith which the Church commemorates this day pervades his works, not only as a separate truth, but as a presiding principle; not only in the phraseology of the parts, but in the structure of the whole. We see that to him the three-

fold activity of Father, Son, and Spirit, was indeed the abstract of theology; that, therefore, this Trinity of powers, or principles, or persons, or whatever other name be employed to denote what no human language can fully express, was not (as some worthy men represent it) the justifiable induction of later times, but the very and original form in which the doctrine itself reposed in the intellect and heart of the Evangelist. We see it here, not in the minuteness of special passages only, but in the magnitude of universal effects also. It is a plastic power working the whole mass of the composition to its own peculiar type; somewhat as the vital principle of an organized frame silently gathers the entire aggregate of particles into the definite form appropriate to itself. The Bible is a kind of shrine or temple in which the Spirit of God dwells among us. Now, let us suppose a stranger from some Pagan land to enter an old Christian cathedral, and to behold, among other things, the figure of a *cross* constantly recurring in the sculptured work of the building. His conclusion would naturally be that this figure had some remarkable relation to the peculiar religious system to which the edifice was appropriated. But how much stronger would be this conclusion if in addition he discovered, on standing at a height and distance such as should allow *the whole* to be seen at a glance, that the entire magnificent structure was *itself* built in the form of a cross; and not one structure alone, but *several* of those which he had the opportunity of examining. The design of the builder, he could say, *might* in the one case, however unlikely the supposition, be counterworked by the unauthorized insertions of subsequent architects; but no such intrusion, however audacious or extensive, could reach to changing the whole plan of the fabric; and if the proof be indeed unquestionable, that the main walls and their foundations are the authentic work of antiquity, in that antiquity the idea that directed their plan must share. If, then, these edifices of immortal truth, this Gos-

pel, this Epistle, this Book of Prophecy, be indeed ancient and inspired; the great predominating thought that fixed their plan and distribution must be ancient and inspired too.

I shall but add, that in thus making this threefold distinction the basis of his whole scheme of instruction, St John has taught you not only its absolute truth but its relative *importance*. Learning from him "the proportion of the faith," we will safely value *that* most, which he thought most precious. If, under those brief but wondrous words,—Father, Son, and Spirit,—he was accustomed to classify all the bright treasures of his inspiration; if into this mould every narrative, every exhortation naturally flowed; if he was wont to see, in the adoration that bowed before this mysterious Triad of eternal powers, the last and loftiest act of religion, the sum and abstract of all the rest; we cannot be wrong in preserving the equilibrium that he has fixed. And if, too, to him this great belief was more than belief, this "light" was also "life;" if he could feel it blessed to acknowledge a Father who is *our* Father, a Son in whom *we* also "are called the sons of God," a Holy Spirit who "dwelleth with *us* and shall be in us;" may we also find in the TRINITY the ground of practical devotion, pure and deep, till, quickened by the power of this faith, the Three that bear record in heaven shall bear their witness in our hearts; and the trinity shall have become, not the cold conclusion of the intellect, but the priceless treasure of the affections, the blessed foundation and the perpetual strength of the new and spiritual life!

SERMON VII.

MEETNESS FOR THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN LIGHT.

(Epistle, 24th Sunday after Trinity.)

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.—COLLOSSIANS i. 12.

IT is the special glory of the Gospel, the foundation or the perfection of all the rest, that it first truly and distinctly, in language beyond the uncertainties of conjecture, the refinements of allegory, or even the bright coloring of hope, enlarged the prospects of men into the depths of eternity. It first clearly and authoritatively taught us that the present existence is the least and meanest portion of our inheritance, and death to the undying spirit only the birth-day of immortal life. From the hour that this awful and glorious secret was revealed to the sons of men, the whole science of life was for ever changed; a new element entered into calculation that transformed all the rest. Had revelation never taught us so, surely this must be still self-evident. From the very nature of the case, a dying and a deathless being must move in different orbits, must revolve on different centres, must obey different attractions. A dying body is adapted to the world of sense and time, a deathless spirit is meant and made for a world immortal as itself. Created eternal, it is intended, from the instant of its birth to breathe the air of eternity. It is at home only

in its own high sphere of being; connected by a visible frame with the present world, it is itself invisible, and lives by the Invisible. Through its own proper organs,—through Faith, and Hope, and Love divine,—it already commences with that eternal scene, and the God of that eternal scene, where hereafter, disburdened of its earthly fetters, it is to dwell and to rejoice for everlasting.

This, then, is the great truth implied in the text, implied more or less directly in every part of the teaching of the New Testament. This—that the life for eternity is *already* begun; that we are at, and from the very hour of our regeneration, introduced into the spiritual world—a world which, though mysterious and invisible, is as real as the world of sense around us; that the Christian's life of heavenliness is the first stage of heaven itself! “The Father,” saith the Apostle, “hath (already supernaturally) made us meet for the inheritance of the saints.” The doctrine of the New Testament is *not* that men, now wholly mortal, wholly perishable, shall hereafter, in reward of fidelity, be miraculously raised to die no more, but that Christian men are already in a true, though most mysterious sense, raised with Christ Jesus and set in heavenly places in Him; that they are now virtually in the very presence and kingdom of God; that they already possess the seed of immortality; that “he that hath the Son *hath* life;” that that life is now “hid with Christ in God,” to be,—not created as out of nothing, but,—manifested, when He “shall be manifested” in glory. Hear again the same Apostle: “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead [now] dwell in you, He that raised up Christ shall also quicken your mortal bodies *by His [now] indwelling Spirit.*” In other words, there is a power now within you in the germ, of which your celestial immortality shall be the proper fruit. The dawn of heaven hath already begun in all who are yet to rejoice in its noontide glory.

No thought surely can be more awakening than this;

none of more urgent and immediate practical importance. Christianity is but half unfolded to us without this doctrine of the present indwelling of the powers of the world to come. That men shall, on the last day, be judged by divine justice, accepted by divine mercy, according to the deeds of their earthly life, is itself a great and impressive truth. But that this *judgment* should itself be blended with another equally certain principle of *qualification*; that the heaven which is to come must have already spiritually arisen within us, and the future glory be thus enclosed in the present grace;—that, therefore, men must not only win heaven as a reward, but be suited for heaven as a life; that the divine principle now within them must have fitted them for the avocations of that better world, moulded them to the tempers of angels, exercised them in the rudiments of that high profession of joyful obedience and adoring homage which is to make the occupation of their eternity,—this is yet more impressive and alarming,—because, whatever delusion may be possible in the former case, it is scarcely conceivable in this. Men may forget their past sins, but they can hardly be ignorant of their present disposition. They may reckon on easy pardon, but they cannot suppress horror and dismay, if they be but once brought to reflect,—that pardon itself, were it possible, would be vain as long as the pardoned sinner were unfit for the society of heaven; that God's own love were fruitless, could the object of it continue to hate his God! Such a pardon could but aggravate the keen sense of hopeless, irremediable misery. What would it avail that the man should be accepted to justification, as long as the miserable object of pardon shrank cowering from the circles of angels, unable to sympathize in their fervors, or find in his heart one echo to their celestial anthems? No: what we are to be in heaven we must be on earth; this is a test that cannot be mistaken or evaded. We are saved that we may for eternity serve God; salvation itself would be misery if

unaccompanied by a love for that service. All aspirations for salvation, then, are vain in which that love forms no element; all desire for pardon is self-contradictory if it do not include an earnest present desire for that enjoyment and that service of God which are to form the sequel and the value of the pardon.

Let me now hope that you have fully entered into the force of the memorable passage before us. We are under a course of education for heaven; the life of heaven must then be *practised* on earth, if the child of God will learn his profession for eternity. The ordinary process must, therefore, be reversed. Instead of estimating heaven by earth, we are bound to estimate and govern earth by heaven. *There* is the pattern in the mount of God; there is the mighty model on which we are to reconstruct our nature; there dwells that central form of moral and spiritual beauty, of which our life is to be the transcript. New-born to heaven, heaven must become our test and standard of every motive, word, and work. The life for which we prepare, the inheritance for which we are made meet, is to determine and regulate the whole course of our present existence.

But here arises a difficulty. Heaven is our pattern; but of heaven we surely can know little. We are taught that the heart of man cannot reach the conception of that abode of blessedness. How then shall we regulate our life by an unknown model? How shall we see by a light which is itself invisible?

An obvious distinction solves this difficulty, and, at the same time, opens the way for that very simple and practical view of the subject with which I desire to engage you. The details of the celestial life we cannot indeed know. The abode in which we are to dwell, the companions with whom we shall rejoice, the bodies,—bright similitudes of Christ,—which we are to wear,—all these, and the like, are matters beyond our limited conjecture. But then it is not

in *these* things that we are bound to practise the celestial life on earth; for no man is bound to the impossible. The principles of that life,—the great general laws of heart and spirit that govern it,—these it is that are to be the principles and laws of this, and these are clear and indisputable. So clear, indeed, and so indisputable, that the slightest exercise of reflection will show you how there is nothing overstrained or romantic in thus, with St Paul, making the future life of heaven the object and the model of the present heavenly life. And the more completely to disentangle the subject of all complication, I shall confine myself to a single and most simple aspect of it.

The business and the beatitude of heaven must consist in conformity of the will to the will of God. From the very nature of the case it cannot be otherwise. Here He is the real, in heaven He must be also the acknowledged sovereign. The office of his creatures must there be to do His work, and that office can be happiness only in so far as His work is to them delightful. The love of God, the willing submission of the whole nature to Him, which is here a duty, is there an essential of existence. To be there and not possess it would be to be locally present in heaven, spiritually absent from it,—to live visibly with angels, to abide invisibly with fiends in torment.

By our principle, then, if this be the great characteristic of heaven, it must be equally the law of earth. Mark, therefore, the specific nature of the motive on which we insist, and distinguish it carefully from all other principles that may counterfeit it, or in their operation accidentally coincide with it. The habit must be ours, not merely of acting from higher principles than self-interest or grosser passion, but of acting simply, directly, and exclusively from obedience to the known appointment of God. No other motive can be tolerated as the leading principle in heaven; no other, then, can be admitted to a share in the heavenly life that prepares for it. All others, however at-

tractive, however amiable, however useful, are “of the earth, earthy.” They may vary in beauty or in value, from the most repulsive forms of moral depravity to the fairest impulses of social affection; but they are all equally remote from the preparatory life of heaven, in so far as they are felt apart from God, in so far as they would equally exist, were God conceived to exist no more.

Here then is the ground and substance of the charge which religion brings against the world. It is not that the world does not abound with manifestations of moral as well as of physical beauty. It is not that many fair and admirable impulses and principles of action are not every day witnessed by men; that the family relation, that the larger social relations, have not their virtues respected and honored among us. This is not what the Gospel asserts (and it is right we should remember that this is not what it asserts) when it speaks of the heart of man as utterly depraved, of the world as a moral ruin. What it does assert is this,—that all which is excellent in the natural man is excellent irrespectively of his God; that he loves, hates, prefers, rejects,—and often rightly too,—but without any thought of God’s laws of preference and rejection; that thus all—and there is much—that is beautiful in his best impulses, is beautiful only as the flower or the landscape is beautiful; his heart as little moving through its circle of social kindness from a desire to approve itself to the God who has commanded them, as the flower expands its petals and sheds its fragrance in voluntary obedience to Him who created it,—the one beauty being as much and as little *religious* as the other. But as we have argued, if every motive must be comparatively worthless for the activities of eternity, but that which connects us directly with our God; if with the earthly framework the earthly impulses shall in death be dissipated, and the immortal spirit be left to those alone which can stand the fiery test of God’s tremendous presence;—then do we press it upon you, that

that which is worthless for heaven must be foreign to the heavenly life on earth; then do we bring all the weight of the immortal world to bear on the perishable; then do we argue from the future to the present, from what shall be yet to what ought to be now; and beseech you to reflect, that no virtue but godliness, no excellence but that which springs from God, no affection but that which tends to God, no rule of life but that which God has sanctioned and which trains for God, can ever be the virtue, or the excellence, or the affection, or the rule, which is fitted for a creature travelling hourly on through Time to God's own Eternity.

You now perceive that our argument has gained another step in advance. We are under education for "the inheritance of the saints in light;" heaven must then fix the character of the life that is to qualify for it. But the blessedness of heaven is the joyful conformity of the will to God; this, then, this alone *can* be the rule and the perfection of human life. Such is the principle, in itself surely so clear as to require little illustration, but in its application liable to some evasion from the degree (already hinted) in which men fail to apprehend the simplicity and purity of the motive here noted, and to separate it from all other springs of action. Permit me, then,—for on this everything hinges,—to contrast this one sole abiding principle of eternal happiness, this true and only discipline for heaven, this earnest and perpetual conformity of man's will to God's which will yet be the glory of "the saints in light," and must now be the preparation for their "inheritance," with the actual and visible life we all behold around us.

I desire to be brief, and one large class may be dismissed without a comment. I deal not with open and avowed vice. My object is to prevent misconception, obscurity, self-deceit; and no subtlety of self-hypocrisy can reconcile with the law and love of God, vices which the world itself professes to discountenance. I come among the amiabilities, the noblenesses, the stern and lofty virtues of our

social life. It is *there* that the warfare against man's fancied perfection must be prosecuted, and the true nature of that one principle of Christian excellence which is yet to be the light and blessedness of heaven, vindicated against all its counterfeits. It is these virtues which the man of the world and the philosopher equally declare themselves unable to conciliate with the uncompromising denunciations of the Gospel. It is these in which I find them most amply justified. The depravity of the world is just its forgetfulness, impatience, contempt of its God; the godless *excellencies*, the unsanctified noblenesses of man, are the truest, the most awful proofs of the fact. That the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, should disclaim subjection to his God is sad, but scarcely surprising; the depth, the universality of the rebellion, is seen in the independence of our very virtues upon God; in the vast sphere of human excellence into which God never once enters; in the amiability that loves all but God, in the self-devotion that never surrendered one gratification for the sake of God; in the indomitable energy that never wrought one persevering work for God; in the enduring patience that faints under no weight of toil except the labor of adoring and praising God. This it is which really demonstrates the alienation of the world from its Maker, that its *best* affections should thus be affections to all but Him; that not the worst alone or the most degraded, but the best and loftiest natures among us should be banded in this conspiracy to exile Him from the world He has made; that when He thus "comes to His own," "His own" should "receive Him not;" that He should have to behold the fairest things He has formed,—kindness, and gratitude, and love,—embracing every object but Himself; the loveliest feeling He has implanted taking root, and growing and blossoming through the world, to bear fruit for all but Him!

That you may the more clearly perceive this momentous, this ever-neglected distinction between mere impulsive

amiability and that one principle of voluntary surrender to God which alone fits for God's eternal world,—let me propose to you a single prominent case. What in our nature is more beautiful than the *family affection*; or what would more readily be alleged as an instance to countervail the Scripture accounts of our fundamental depravity and perversion? The young mother for weeks will hang over the couch of her babe, with a depth of self-abandonment, as if the life she had given were still undivided from her own, and the same vital tide still circulated through both. The excitements of youth and society suddenly lose all their charm. The enjoyments, the comforts, the very necessities of life are forgotten in the total absorption of this affection: life itself is willingly sacrificed in behalf of this yet more precious existence, an existence as yet undeveloped, that can know nothing of the pains it gives, can return nothing for all this lavish devotion but tears, and waywardness, and cries. Beautiful indeed is this; the coldest nature must acknowledge its loveliness, must recognize its value. But where is its relation to *God*? Or how much less of it would exist were God's existence conceived to cease for ever? It is not surely because God commands the mother's care that it is ordinarily given, but because God has framed her *nature* to bestow it. It is not duty but affection that binds her to her infant's cot. She does *what is right*, but not simply *because it is right*. Or if you doubt it, reflect whether her affection, after all, exceeds that of the inferior animals, willingly dying in defence of their offspring, yet wholly incapable of the very conception of duty or of God. In this, then, we need see (except incidentally) no recognition of a divine command; we only see the power and intensity of those affections which the human heart, prodigal to bestow them upon all earthly objects, never dreams of tendering to its God. And, therefore, while we praise and love such beautiful exhibitions of affection (God forbid we should say ought that might appear to slight them!) we are

forced to maintain that in themselves they may form no discipline whatever for heaven, no practice of the diviner life; because felt apart from God, and, however coincident with His law, yet wrought without any intended relation, or willing subjection, to the law they obey.

I have suggested to you a single instance of the distinction which I would impress,—the distinction between acting from amiable impulse and acting from obedience to God; but you will see how deeply it cuts into the boasted excellencies of our nature. Where shall we look for the high and heavenly in that nature, if not in such a case as this? Yet this, it is clear, has little or no relation to God, and must, therefore, be nearly worthless as an element in that training of the will for God's eternal world which forms the object of our text. What more can be said for friendship, for honor, for patriotism, for all in which man ordinarily exults; so far as these human virtues manifest no direct recognition of God or subjection to God? Admirable for their own temporary purpose, and in their own limited sphere, they can be of little or no value in a world where their objects will have disappeared; where nothing can fully avail but those graces which have learned to embrace as their object but that one all-sufficient Object whose glory and whose power fill the amplitude of heaven and of eternity. Need I say more to make you clearly understand that the reputed virtues of human society are no education for God; inasmuch as they all more or less lack that one essential character without which all virtue is profitless for heaven, and would be useless in heaven,—the habit of acting from the love, and in obedience to the will of God. Clearly apprehend this momentous distinction; and on confidence in personal virtue, no blindness to personal depravity, can stand against it. Joyful obedience must be the happiness of heaven; joyful obedience must, therefore, be the holiness of earth. No vaunted virtue, wrought *out* of God, amiability of manner, gentleness of temper, fidelity of friendship, honor,

integrity, decorum,—no virtue that leaves the heart a rebel to its Maker, or forgetful of Him, can dispose for heaven, or “make meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.”

How, then, shall the work be wrought? How shall we produce the heavenly mind which fits for a heavenly world? Clearly and solely, by cultivating affections that rest in heaven itself and its God; and by devoting our *earthly* affections not merely as their own instinctive impulses lead, but also, as far as may be, in felt and constant conformity to His appointment. RELIGION, as distinct from the virtues of society, the graceful amenities of ordinary life,—RELIGION, which fixes the heart wholly and permanently on God Himself,—it is no enthusiasm, no idle speculative illusion, to affirm that this alone can meet the requirements of a creature formed for God and His eternity. Faith, and hope, and love, which are the great organs or exercises of religion, are the instruments which, gradually uniting the heart to the spiritual world and its Lord, separate it from earth, predispose it for heaven, win the will to His service, spiritually *disembody* the soul before its time, and train it for the fellowship and the heritage of the saints. Through these the pathway lies to heaven, and through these alone. These are the habits that must be attained, or heaven is plainly hopeless. Truly understand what heaven *is*, and you will see that salvation is impossible, unless by these divine affections the spirit is first moved to know, and to desire, and to love Him, whom to know is eternal life.

What, then, are the specific functions of each of these great preparatory graces? How does each minister to the common work of discipline for the world of “the saints in light”?

Faith is the realizing power. Its office in this work of preparation is to make us see the unseen, to be the visual sense of the Spirit. Beholding God even now around us, it prepares for heaven by already habituating to the pre-

sence of heaven's eternal Master. Even this existing world is a scene of deep awe to the spirit of faith; it is pervaded by the providence of God, it is haunted by His angels. The spiritual system that encompasses us as Christians is still more wondrous; and this is the constant sphere of faith. And beyond them both stretches out into infinity that everlasting world which faith accepts with equal certainty; which receiving, with trembling joy, the message of divine mercy, she recognizes for her own; and which, confiding in the excellence of a glory she cannot yet adequately conceive, she delivers over to the bright visions of Christian hope.

Hope is the consoling and fortifying power. She prepares for heaven by maintaining the constant desire and expectation of its promised enjoyments. As faith dwells on the testimony of the glory to come, hope reposes on the glory itself. In hours of sorrow and trial the magnificent vision still brightens through all their clouds; until, as it were, wrought into the substance of the soul, it becomes a part of its better nature, and, coloring it with its anticipated heaven, fits it, by the very earnestness of desire, for the glory it desires.

But love is the uniting power, the consummation and the perfection of all. In its highest degrees this is not so much a preparation for heaven as heaven already begun; for we know of nothing more perfect in heaven than the fulness of loving union with God. And hence (as you will all remember) St Paul, declaring that it "never faileth," distinguishes this grace as one which, though born on earth, lives prolonged into eternity. But even in its lower degrees,—for its degrees are infinite,—we can easily understand how that love of God which makes His commandments "not grievous" here, must prepare for a state when their fulfilment shall be intense delight hereafter; how the habit of dwelling on His perfections now must fitly increase the faculty and the enjoyment of beholding and

adoring them hereafter; how the spirit, awaking in the likeness of God, whatever new and wondrous prerogatives it may then acquire, shall nevertheless recognize an identity, not only of itself but of its affections, surviving death, and shall glory to resume, in the immediate light of the divine countenance, those contemplations of His infinite righteousness, wisdom, and truth, which death suspended for a while, but which are equally fitted to be the happiness of both worlds. And thus on earth the love of God fits the spirit for its own development and perfection in heaven. And thus doth the Father, implanting in us initiatory graces, faith, and hope, and love, qualify His children for the blessedness that awaits them; not more anxiously preparing His Paradise for them, than preparing them for Paradise.

So, then, brethren, heaven is our destined profession for everlasting; and earthly life,—let the expressive phrase, though homely, be pardoned,—is our professional education. We are pupils in the art of eternally serving the divine Master; the Church of Christ is the infant school of the children of God. “Boys ought most to learn,” said the ancient sage, “what most they shall need when they become men;” men, by the same principle, are bound to learn what most they shall need as immortals. We are pilgrims to a dwelling-place of blessedness; and the light that streams through its open portals ought to suffuse us as we approach them. An anticipated beatitude, a sanctity that even now breathes of Paradise, a grace which is already tinged with the richer hues of glory—these should mark the Christian disciple; and these, as he advances in years, should brighten and deepen upon and around him, until the distinction of earth and heaven is almost lost, and the spirit, in its placid and unearthly repose, is gone, as it were, before the body, and at rest already with its God. This may seem but an ideal; and too sad it is that it should too commonly be only such; for once adequately conceive

the Christian's gift and privilege, and what have I described which ought not naturally to characterize him? A being already invested with a deathless life, already adopted into the immediate family of God, already enrolled in the brotherhood of angels, yea, of the Lord of Angels; a being who, amid all the revolutions of earth and skies, feels and knows himself indestructible, capacitated to outlast the universe, a sharer in the immortality of God;—what is there that can be said of such an one which falls not below the awful glory of his position? Oh, misery, that with such a calling man should be the grovelling thing he is!—that, summoned but to pause for a while in the vestibule of the eternal temple, ere he be introduced into its sanctuaries, he should forget in the dreams of his lethargy, or learn, poor scoffer! to despise the eternity that awaits him. Oh, wretchedness beyond words, that, surrounded by love and invited by glory, he should have no heart for happiness; but should still love to cower in the dark while light ineffable solicits him to behold and to enjoy it! Oh, horror yet more terrific, that him whom love and joy cannot attract, even vengeance and torment cannot alarm; that, unwilling to receive God as merciful, he cannot be taught to remember Him as just; or to reflect that he who refuses to prepare for the inheritance of the saints in light, is by that very refusal hardening his own heart to the temper of the inheritors of darkness!

Finally, brethren, professing, as even by your very attendance in this house of God you now profess, to aim at heaven, essay to live in the spirit of heaven! Cultivate its dispositions! its love for a loving God, its tenderness for even unloving man! Live, as millions of spiritual creatures even *now* living, who differ from you in this, indeed, that they see what you believe, that they possess what you inherit, but who, in all their angelic ecstasies, can point to no such attestation of infinite affection as God has mani-

fested to *you*, and who might well be the *pupils* in divine love of those for whom God Himself became man, and poor, and crucified, in order that, having purchased us by His blood, He might purify us by His Spirit, and, refining His creatures of the dust into His own likeness, to prepare them for His own kingdom, might “make them meet to be” at last “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

SERMON VIII.

OCCASIONAL MYSTERIOUSNESS OF CHRIST'S TEACHING— CHRIST OUR "LIFE."

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.—JOHN viii. 51.

THE Scriptures of God, my brethren, are not to be practically interpreted without the *Spirit* of God. It is perfectly true that much may be done in the field of critical argument and exposition without any supernatural aid. It is quite certain that a vast and elaborate commentary upon these Scriptures may be written, and read, and understood, without the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is supposable that a man may declaim with an overwhelming energy, and a force of genius altogether astonishing, upon the majestic mysteries of God's providence and grace; that he may have power to arouse feelings, whether of tenderness or terror, that long lay slumbering in the lowest depths of the natural human heart, and, with a potency like the fabled miracles of magic, to call them out at his bidding; and yet that neither he, nor any one of his audience, have ever known, in any sense that shall tell to their *eventual* salvation, one breath of the effectual Spirit of God, one pulsation of the genuine spiritual life! There is absolutely nothing to prevent the intellect from exercising itself upon the Christian revelation, more than upon the contents of any other printed book; or the reason from estimating it, or the imagination from building on it, or even the gentler

affections from softening at its details. It is thrown in the midst of the world exactly like any other volume around it, printed with the same types, read with the same eyes; heard with the same ears; and the faculties and feelings of man will of course act upon it as they do upon any other history. But (if the Book itself may be allowed to declare its own claims and prerogatives) all this external similarity is accompanied with a total internal difference; and this book differs from every other, in requiring, so to speak, an organ specially prepared to receive its real purport. These things are "*spiritually* discerned."

And yet, while we uphold this awful distinction, we must balance the account by *another* principle, which seems intimated with equal clearness, and which, I believe, it would be fatal to all right views of religion to overlook. The change which takes place in each individual soul under the mysterious agency of the Spirit is vast, but it is not unlimited. Whatever real fanaticism (in some ages of the Church), or unintentional but injudicious exaggeration, may have urged,—it does not appear that the office of the Spirit of God is to supply us with affections in themselves substantially new,—to bestow a something which is neither love nor fear, nor hope, nor desire,—but simply to direct the old affections to higher objects, to employ the former mechanism for more exalted purposes. The whole array of the human affections, under their old names and in their old characters, are brought out in strong relief in every page of Scripture; the object of the apostolic preaching, and teaching, and warning, and example, is manifestly not to annihilate, but to "direct, sanctify, and govern them," upon better principles and under higher guidance. But we have spoken of a great and necessary *change*: with these elements preserved unaltered, where, then, is the scene of the work of the Spirit? where, is the field on which this mighty revolution is wrought? Unquestionably, in the *object* revealed, and in the corresponding *attrac-*

tion of the heart to that object. He who is supernaturally gifted sees not with other eyes, but he sees what other eyes cannot see, and loves what other hearts cannot love! When the first martyr, "full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven," his visual organ was itself, doubtless, unchanged: but while others looked upon the common skies, and saw but clouds or sunshine, he alone "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Head and heart, the regenerate is still the same man; but in a new world of bright and eternal realities: and though "every thought," his whole intellectual organ, remains un mutilated, yet every thought is "brought captive to the obedience of Christ." Thus God conciliates His worlds of nature and grace, and evinces that nothing was made in vain. *Sin* itself is an element in discipline; and as for the affections enthralled by its despotism, they are sinful not in themselves as affections, but in their depravation; they are meant to be not the bond-slaves of evil, but the liberated "servants of righteousness;" they are born for eternity and for God!

Let us then, ever maintain for the Spirit of Truth,—and more than ever in these days, in which we are wont to hear the gravest truths of revelation questioned or diluted, or overlooked,—His own unparticipated right to illumine man; not indeed by making man no longer man, but by feeding the affections with holy food, by inviting them to holy objects. In this work He is alone. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." The old and the new creation are alike exclusively divine. The revelation of God itself, as delivered in books, dare not dispute this honor with the Everlasting Spirit. That revelation is written in a language familiar to our daily thoughts and converse; it speaks of life, and death, and faith, and hope, and love,—all household words, which in their earthly acceptation every man can speak of and define; but to *pass* from the earthly term to the heavenly purport, from the natural

object to the supernatural, from the life of the flesh to the life of the spirit, from the faith which trusts in the brotherman to the faith which trusts in the "first-born among many brethren," from the love and hope that are entangled among creatures of clay to the love and hope that are busy among the immortal realities of heaven,—this is an art which the Spirit that inspired the Scriptures *alone* can teach to the man who reads them!

Reflections of this kind, my beloved brethren, are naturally prompted by the passage before us, taken in connection with the singular dialogue of which it is a part. They are among the first which will occur to meditative students of our Lord's habitual teaching (in which there was at all times a striking similarity of style and method); but perhaps on no occasion does this profound lesson of the necessity of spiritual enlightenment meet us more forcibly than upon the perusal of this remarkable discussion, recorded in the eighth chapter of St John.

The divine instructor is in the midst of His Jewish audience. They surround Him, half awed by His dignity, half provoked by his calmness. Undisturbed, and as if He felt himself more truly addressing ages to come,—as if He stood in the presence, not of a few contentious disputants, but of the Church He was to found and to redeem,—yea, as if He spoke in the presence of "an innumerable company of angels" and the "spirits of the just", whom He was to "perfect,"—in such a tone as this He replies to their cavils. His words, while they sufficiently answer the objections of His adversaries, yet answer them *upon principles which they cannot yet comprehend*; and though these weighty sentences seem at first sight designed for present and immediate use, they are now known to be really pregnant with the deepest mysteries of the spiritual life, and only to be understood by those who have had *experience* in that life. Christ spoke to futurity, and pre-supposed a spiritual illumination not yet bestowed. He would evince the necessity of a divine inter-

preter to unfold and explain His own words; and *therefore* He speaks,—truths indeed, but truths whose deep purport He knew those whom He addressed were wholly unable to penetrate. *What* are the topics of this solemn discourse? "Truth"—"freedom"—"life"—"death,"—all intelligible terms, surely, but, in their spiritual import, to the unspiritualized mind, dark as the counsels of God, fathomless as eternity!

Two important uses can be made of this peculiarity in our Lord's method of address, combined with this view of its object. The first we have in some measure seen. Such a discourse as that to which I am calling your attention shows us Christ Himself proceeding on the necessity of the supernatural illumination He was afterwards to bestow. He speaks, as it were, in *cypher*; the Spirit of God is to furnish the solution. He teaches, then, by *example* no less than precept, that that Spirit alone can unfold the things of the Spirit; His very *obscurity* to the audience who heard Him is a perpetual assumption of the principle. To the Christian believer, therefore, the adoring contemplation of such a discourse suggests something over and above the purport of each separate passage. It urges him to pray for a lamp of heavenly light to read it by! It bids him not be content, in this or any other portion of Scripture, with words, but to covet earnestly to be familiar with *things*,—truths,—realities. It impresses the lesson so perpetually forgotten, that as in all subjects we can understand language only as far as we have some *experience* of the things it imports; so in religion (by the very same principle) the spiritual heart alone can understand the language of the Spirit. Think of it for a moment, and you will find that, in every book whatever, it is the mind of the reader that puts meaning in the words; the language of the new covenant is a celestial language, and they who will give their fulness to *its* blessed words must have caught their secret from heaven! But again:

To the *infidel* impugner of Christianity, this view of the special *design* of the apparent obscurity of discourses such as this, and the refusal of our Lord to descend from His own lofty strain in order to meet on a lower ground the ignorance of His assailants,—obviously resists a popular objection to His method of instruction. But it does more than this. Let us but suppose that St John has *truly* reported the discussion before us. What then are the facts? Language is here employed unintelligible to the unenlightened Jew, in effect unprofitable, as far as we can see, for any *immediate* purpose; certainly little calculated to conciliate temporary popularity: yet this very language, which then dropped from those divine lips, neglected or despised, except by a few humble followers, becomes afterwards treasured, published, known universally, and, even by those who partially disregard it, admitted to be stamped with the impress of a great and exalted mind. *Who*, then, was this Being, that thus, wandering among the suburbs of Jerusalem, could afford to lose the present in the future? and not this only, but to count upon a future which so perfectly realized His calculation? Does not the whole strain of the discourse evince the calm prescience of one who was familiar with the secrets of time to come, who knew that He *would* be, though He was *not yet*, appreciated; and is not, therefore, the very obscurity, and the very reserve, which the assailant of the divine mission of Christ offers as an objection, itself, as facts and history have now established, an inward indication of a knowledge supernatural and divine?

So far, brethren, we have spoken of the general character of this momentous discourse, which, as the most prominent instance of our Lord's mode of meeting His adversaries, deserves deep and patient study. We have seen that He speaks a mysterious language of which He declines to offer any immediate explanation. We have seen a strong reason for His adoption of this course,—to impress the paramount necessity of spiritual enlightenment; and we have seen how

forcibly this seeming neglect of the perverted and petulant Jew that heard Him, for the higher interests of the Church that was to succeed His ascension, demonstrated His inward knowledge of futurity.

II. Let us now, for a while, rest upon *one* of those many mysterious phrases of the discourse, the expression recorded in the text, "If a man keep my saying, *he shall never see death.*" You cannot fail to remember how fatally the Jews misunderstood this mighty declaration, in imagining that our Lord promised to His followers the doubtful blessing of an earthly immortality; and how they objected to Him the death of their greatest ancestor, as a sufficient evidence of the supposed arrogance of Him who offered to give that which Abraham could not keep. WE know that He spoke of a deeper mystery of holiness; I have said that the Spirit alone can convey the idea by conveying the experience; but the Spirit is ever most willing to visit those who await Him in the word of God, and who, by earnest and patient application of the natural faculties (knowing that to the possession of these, no less, yea more, than to any other trust from heaven, is, on grounds of even uninspired reason, attached a deep responsibility), labor after celestial wisdom, and thus, as far as man may, bring themselves into the blessed sphere of higher supernatural influences. It is no insult to the Spirit of God to affirm, that He has His own sphere, His own laws, His own conditions of operation; and that we must meet Him in subordination to these if we would meet Him at all. Jordan may far exceed Abana and Pharpar; but what avails the excellence of the waters of healing, if the unbelief of the spiritual leper prevent him from seeking them; or if his still more culpable presumption betray him into expecting that the miracle which graciously makes them a bath of life, will of course be extended either to conveying the unwilling recusant to their banks, or to diffusing the mysterious influence through

every breath of air he draws, in order to suit his indolent convenience.

That there is an inseparable connection between "Christ" and "life" no student of the New Testament can overlook. "*The life* was manifested," says St John, in his First Epistle, "and we have seen it." The life thus "manifested" was, doubtless, Christ Himself, conformably to the same Evangelist's record of his divine Master's proclamation, that He was "the resurrection and *the life*," "the way, the truth, and *the life*." Christ is "the life," plainly because,—by what process I do not now inquire,—*the cause* of life, as He is said to be, our "peace" and our "sanctification," because He is the source of these blessings; or, as dying Simeon in his parting hymn designates Him, the "Salvation," of which He was the author and securer. The purport of the expression (as attributing to Christ the production of life) is more directly given in that title which St Peter employed in the third of Acts, "Ye killed the Prince [author, leader] of life,"—a form of phrase evidently intended to heighten the atrocity of the act by the force of the *contrast*.

So far there can be little doubt or difference of opinion. But when, from the mere fact of the intimate *connection* of the Lord of life and the life He bestows, we advance to estimate more precisely the nature or extent of this "life," we find among those who undertake to speak of these matters much uncertainty and variance. (1) Some will tell you that the phrase ascribes to Christ the power of immortalizing human souls; (2) others, in a higher and truer strain, that it attributes to Him the *spiritual* resurrection from the death of sin, which takes place in every regenerated soul; (3) others, again, that it pronounces Him the author and bestower of an eternity, not merely of existence, but of *happiness* in heaven. These are indeed mighty gifts; they all alike presuppose a power nothing below divine; for if *creation* be divine, the recreation, whether to *existence*,

to *righteousness*, or to *bliss*, of God's noblest earthly creatures, surely partakes of the same supreme character of power. But nobler still it is to look upon them *all* as issuing from *the same* eternal fountain. Here, then, is the solution of the difficulty. These opinions are separately true, but separately imperfect; the Messiah unites in Himself all these offices, offices themselves essentially connected with Him and with each other!

1. "In Christ all shall be made alive;" but that the depth and extent of the scriptural term "life" can never be limited to the mere revival of the soul from death or unconsciousness, seems obvious on the most cursory inspection of the sacred volume. So far is mere immortality from answering to this gift of life, that there is a species of immortality to which the title of *death*,—"eternal death," and "the second death,"—is scripturally given. Accordingly Christ Himself expressly terms the passage to the future state of glory, the "resurrection of *life*," in contrast to "the resurrection of *damnation*" (John v. 20); and he is said to have brought not merely "immortality," but "life *and* immortality," to light. The same St Paul, who assigns Him this high office, declares that the Gospel promises to those who seek "honor, and glory, and immortality, eternal life," evidently considering that this eternal life *involves them all*; for surely the prize (in a land whose blessedness "the heart of man" is declared unable to conceive) will not be inferior to the aim which its votaries can here propose to their conceptions. It appears hence that this "life," as well as the "death" spoken of in the text, is essentially a *moral*, not a merely physical state or notion; that it is a blessed and spiritual vitality. To express His highest spiritual bestowments no term is more frequently employed by our blessed Lord than "light;" now this light is itself perpetually connected with His descriptions or intimations of the *life* He was to bestow, and that in a manner which indissolubly combines the two. My followers shall have

“the *light of life*,” He declares to the Pharisees (John viii. 12); while “the shadow of death” is, as you know, the constant type of a state of hopeless spiritual ruin. It was to those who “lay in the shadow of *death*,” that “the *day-spring from on high* came to give *light*.” And surely this use of “life,” to express “blessedness” was, in the mouth of our Redeemer, perfectly natural. His very existence was one long impulse of holiness; to Him to live was to live in holiness; and He naturally and habitually spoke of that eternal life with which alone He was familiar, as identical with eternal holiness. He borrowed His language from that celestial dialect, where there is but one term for existence, and that term is “glory!” When He promised life He promised all that was unchangeably associated with it in *His own* divine experience. Nothing short of a transcendent and abiding exaltation of nature deserved the title of that *life* which he was to communicate to His followers.

The “life,” then of which the New Testament reveals to us the story, is beyond and above the mere consciousness of existence, or its indefinite prolongation; “the water of life” which, as we are told, flows so liberally in the Paradise of God, is more than a physical elixir; the “fruit of the tree of life” is more than a physical sustenance. And in like manner, he who (as in the text) is promised security from “*death* for ever,” is rescued from a fate far more terrible than annihilation; he is rescued from the miseries of death protracted into eternity!

2, 3. We cannot, then, have much embarrassment in setting aside this undue limitation of the “eternal life,” which Christ has purchased for His followers. But greater difficulty has sometimes been found in appropriating to their respective passages the other significations which I have mentioned: the spiritual life of holiness in the soul, and the eternal life of happiness hereafter. Of *both* these Christ is equally the author; and while we know that St Paul found it necessary (2 Tim. ii. 18) to repress a notion

which, even in his days, had gained votaries, that the resurrection to life, of which the Redeemer had spoken, was a purely spiritual exaltation of the soul, and, as such, accomplished in this world; perhaps *we* may sometimes be in danger of falling into the opposite extreme. The truth is, that these things are essentially and forever *united*, and this is the reason why the same phrase is employed to characterize them both. Let me ask you to consider this a little more deeply.

We know that even in the ordinary exercise of the moral faculty in men, there is usually included a consciousness of *desert*, and thence, in minds at all trained to carry out their own conceptions, a strong anticipation of some yet unrealized attestation of the ineffaceable distinctions of good and evil, in the form of recompense. We are not, therefore, to wonder that, through almost every region of heathenism, human nature bore and bears witness,—faintly, indeed, but truly,—to this mighty connection of the present with the future; and that some were even found among the unbaptized world who could boldly tell the servant of virtue, that though the reason of man had no hand to unweave the tangled web of Providence, it had an eye to look through it, and a voice to pronounce with infallible certainty, that the power that rules the universe rules Himself and it by the immutable law of right. Now Christianity is the law of right in its fullest action; and with a clear and constant apprehension of the true character of God, as proclaimed in revelation, such anticipations of the future development of his government cannot but brighten into a *belief* that becomes indissolubly *associatea with* a course of earnest virtue,—cannot but, by the inevitable operation of habitual reflection, be so bound up with it as to become a part of its very idea; so that the service here and the glory hereafter become perpetual companions in the thoughts, each supposing and demanding the other. And if this be so, which all experience confirms,

surely it is not difficult to conceive that the child of God may so feel his future inheritance *realized* in his present graces as at length to identify them in conception and in name; the preparatory life of this world, and the consummate life of the next, being the two inseparable elements mutually inclusive, of the office of the quickening Spirit in relation to the soul of man.

But this identification becomes infinitely more natural, when we reflect on the substantial sameness of the inward state in both the stages of being, a sameness of which this phraseology is at once the consequence and the proof. If that ineffable gift, Christ received into heart of man by faith, be indeed a principle whose developments are to make the history of immortality, why *should* we disjoin the principle from its results? If it be indeed "a well of water *springing up* into everlasting *life*," why should we seek a separate title for the fountain and the river, that, issuing from its silent depths, flows away into eternity? If it be a "seed" whose bloom is to be an amaranth, the immortal flower, shall we not name it from its period of perfection, and love to lose the feeble present in the glories of the unfading future? And, surely, could we look upon death as Christians should look, could we see in it a mysterious baptism, an infant baptism of the "little children" of God, from the Church suffering into the Church triumphant, far *less* startling than that baptism of old which was our mystic transit from the world into the suffering Church; it is with feelings and language such as I have described, that we would feel and speak of that "Holy Spirit of promise which is the *earnest* of our inheritance;" of that Spirit which already "bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then *heirs*:" in short, of the substantial oneness of the spiritual life, from the first hour of the incorporation into Christ, wheresoever wrought on, unto very eternity!

Nay, I know not if even yet we have reached the deep

truth of this matter. We all know how the spiritual and the vitally eternal are united in Scripture phraseology, whenever it has occasion to speak of the "law of the *Spirit of life*," of that "Spirit" which "IS LIFE because of righteousness," of that "spiritual-mindedness" which "IS LIFE" as well as "peace." The more you rest upon these profound sayings, the more you will feel that they speak of some mystic intimacy of inward connexion, which answers to all that we can conceive of an absolute *unity* of nature; and that, had we faculties to see these things, we might perceive that a *deathless* permanence belongs to the spiritual thing inherent in the regenerate mind, if it indeed evidence its genuineness by there through earthly life abiding and fruitifying, in virtue of a natural necessity as real as that which perpetuates any of the unalterable laws and relations which reason apprehends in the universe of God. The spiritual is essentially eternal. In the theory of Christianity (if I may use that formal name for the glimpses which we gain in the New Testament of the mighty mysteries of God) they are not two ideas, but two aspects of one and the same idea; and they are thence used so as to imply each other. "Whoso drinketh my blood and eateth my flesh *hath* eternal life, and I," who thus abide in him, "will raise him up;" he hath within him the principle which will afterwards manifest itself (as in a natural re-appearance) in glory. "He that believeth in me *hath passed* from death unto life;" "he that hath the Son *hath life*." Christ, then, and His sacred interpreters, seem to have intimated that in sanctity there is *essentially* comprised a germ of immortality; that holiness is so far necessarily connected with that universal scheme of perfection of which it is a part, as to partake of its inherent eternity and inherent happiness, of nature. Feeling thus, they could regard the indwelling of Christ's eternal Spirit *now* to be not so much (one might say) the condition, as the first stage of glory; and thence, to speak of the "life" bestowed by Christ in inward holiness

in time, and the "life" bestowed by Christ in perfect happiness in eternity, was not to speak of two lives, but of two forms of one incorruptible, uninterrupted, unchangeable gift of everlasting life.

Such views as these, then (which, if I were not afraid of taxing your attention unduly, might be carried much farther), seem to show how closely connected are the three forms of life, physical, spiritual, and eternal, of which "Christ, who is our life," is the Almighty Author. The more you reflect upon this mighty theme, the more you will see that His office, instead of being limited to any, grasps them all; that He must raise the dead as Judge and Saviour, that he may punish and that he may save; that He bestows a quickening principle of *spiritual* life upon the soul, which must pass the grave, for nothing holy can perish; it "partakes of the divine nature," it is "incorruptible seed," and *must* flower in Paradise: finally, that of this last consummate state He is also Lord and Donor, and in love shall rejoice as He beholds the *same* light which once was dawn, hereafter settling in that noon which knows no sunset!

Of this life divine it is but to be said, that it is traceable to an unfathomable fountain in the infinite essence of God the Father: "the Father hath life *in Himself*." From Him it is declared to be received by His Son, yet received with a certain mystic independency; "Even so hath He *given* to the Son to have life *in Himself*," and from Him it flows abroad upon mankind, according to the inscrutable laws of the divine purpose: "Even so the *Son* maketh alive whom He will;" "as I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live *by me*;" "*because I live* ye shall live also;"—a purpose of which we only know that it directs itself by the practical belief of the receiver, for "he that believeth" it is who "hath everlasting life," or, as the text expresses it, "he that keepeth my saying shall never see death." Thus is every believing child of God, no matter in what earthly

bondage groaning, in what earthly misery sunk, bound by a chain of adamant to the very throne of the ever-blessed Trinity. There is that in him which hath its birthplace in the bosom of the "High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity;" the life of Him who bids the universe live is enshrined in his inmost spirit! "He shall never see death," for he is one with Him who cannot die; He has entered within the portals of glory; he has laid his hand upon the ark of God. Dungeon may confine him, death may threaten him; but the dungeon-bolt cannot exclude the risen Saviour, and death itself is but the seal and passport of his immortality. Brethren! how is it that we awake not to these transcendent claims? How is it that, with such an image and superscription upon us, we can bear to mingle with the dull alloy of earth? How is it that, with all these awful assurances of the mighty thing the spirit of a man indeed is, when bound in everlasting unity with the spirit of Christ, we can live unthoughtful of such an heritage, as if *this* world, with its melancholy mockery of hope and happiness, were meant to fill the heart that a God has once deigned to visit and sanctify; or as if the curtain that hung upon the grave had never been indeed withdrawn by the triumphant Conqueror of sin and death!

"He that keepeth my saying shall never see death!" Many a dark century has passed away since the walls of the temple echoed these glorious words; words, one would deem, that, uttered from God to man, might well change the face of the world, might arouse from one end of earth to the other a high and holy ambition to join the bright band of immortals thus summoned to the courts of God's own palace by God's own voice! O sad reverse of reality! The people of God, the keepers of the sayings of Christ, far from filling all lands, and glorifying every clime, are a scattered race, often a destitute and persecuted race! Doubtless, our faith is yet to hold the earth in fee; ulti-

mately it shall take in the whole wide family of man; but at the present period, and ever since its foundation, it is vain to deny that if "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," it has been as truly partial in its actual results upon the eternal state of mankind, as Judaism itself upon their temporal condition. Age after age, a few hundreds or thousands of contemporary believers are collected into the treasure cities of immortal happiness, gathered from various spots in the wide Christian world; and there the operation ceases! "Many are called," but it is still too melancholy a certainty that "few are chosen." It is as if mankind formed a vast garden of diversified plants, out of which the great florist selects here and there a few promising shoots upon which to exhaust all the resources of divine art, to show how holy a thing human nature *may* be made, and to fit for transplanting into His own special conservatory. Into this awful mystery, the most tremendous in all the divine government, I dare not intrude. I tremble at my own insignificance when I stand before this cloud that covers the mercy-seat of God! A voice from the sanctuary declares that "God is *Love*," and it is enough; I believe the voice. I leave it to the secret alchemy of divine wisdom to convert evil into good, and (as even in our own limited experience) out of destruction to bring forth life. But while I leave, and would bid *you* leave, in faith, to the eternal Father, the dispositions of His own boundless empire, I cannot abandon the right, and high privilege of the minister, to summon all who hear me to ponder the practical instruction that this appalling mystery impresses. When the disciples once inquired, "who then can be saved?" the answer was consolatory, that "with God all things are possible." When, on another occasion, a similar question was proposed,—“are there few that be saved?” the answer was severe, practical, and imperative: "Strive to enter in at the narrow gate!" And such should be the mingled web of our conclusions on the subject; a *combina-*

tion of confidence in the absolute goodness of God, and of earnest resolution to be warned by the terrors of his threats.

"He that keepeth my saying shall never see death!" Mark, brethren! it is no *momentary* adoption of the faith and law of Christ to which eternal life is the promised recompense. It is no transient emotion of passionate grief, no occasional sympathy with martyred virtue, no evanescent enthusiasm in the cause of the Gospel, that forms in the heart of man the germ of future glory; it is "to *keep* the saying of Christ." Our Christianity is momentary, because its principle is momentary; we turn to religion to diversify our life, not to *be* our life. But oh! as you would indeed be the sealed and reserved inheritors of glory, remember this—that God will not condescend to take His place among the fashions of the day! Remember, that Christianity is not a new system of theological reasoning, nor a new assortment of phraseology, nor a new circle of acquaintance, nor even a new line of meditation,—but a new *life*. Its very being and essence is inward and practical; it is not the likeness or the history of a living thing, it is itself alive! And therefore to examine its evidence is not to try Christianity; to admire its martyrs is not to try Christianity; to compare and estimate its teachers is not to try Christianity; to attend its rites and services with more than Mahometan punctuality is not to try or know Christianity. But for one week, for one day, to have lived in the pure atmosphere of faith and love to God, of tenderness to man: to rejoice in the felt and realized presence of Him who is described as "coming up from the wilderness," supporting his beloved; to have beheld earth annihilated and heaven opened to the prophetic gaze of hope; to have seen evermore revealed behind the complicated troubles of this strange, mysterious life, the unchanged smile of an eternal Friend, and everything that is difficult to reason solved by that reposing trust which is higher and better than reason:

to have known and felt this, I will not say for a *life*, but for a single blessed hour, *that*, indeed, is to have made experiment of Christianity,—that is to know the imperishable work of the Spirit in preparing souls for eternity,—*that* is to “keep the saying” which shall keep from death,—*that* is to have a glimpse of the meaning of those mystic words which I will not dare to paraphrase or amplify, but which are in themselves all, and more than all, I have attempted to express,—that “OUR LIFE IS HID with Christ in GOD.”

SERMON IX.

SELF-DELUSION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD.

(Preached before the University of Dublin.)

If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves.—1 JOHN i. 8.

WHEN our parents in Paradise had broken the command of God, we are told that, among the earliest tokens of their corrupted nature (thenceforward the unhappy inheritance of their race), they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden;” but we may be assured, that that guilty impulse of concealment had been preceded by another which was a no less fatal token and accompaniment of guilt,—and that, as after their crime they strove to hide from God, so during, and before it, they had too successfully learned to hide from themselves! It is among the most potent of the energies of sin, that it leads astray by blinding, and blinds by leading astray; that the soul of man, like the strong champion of Israel, must have its “eyes put out” when it would be “bound with fetters of brass,”—and condemned “to grind in the prison-house.”—Judges xvi. 21. Our divine Instructor has taught us, that men “love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;” and the force of the reason, the power of the “because,” is not merely from such extrinsic influences as shame, and the dread of detection, and the impatience of reproof, and the jealous dislike of an excellence that perpetually condemns them, but, doubtless, besides all these

and similar motives, from the very necessity of the case, from the inherent and inevitable efficacy of sin to diffuse darkness, and to make us in love with the darkness it diffuses. The heathen, according to St Paul, "had the *understanding* darkened," and "were alienated from the life of God *through ignorance*;" and he traces this melancholy "lack of knowledge through which the people were destroyed" to its fountain in the "blindness of *their heart*."—Eph. iv. 18. And they who perish under the spells of that lying prophet whose coming is "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," perish "because they received not *the love of the truth*, that they might be saved," being "for that cause sent strong delusions that they should believe a lie."—2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. Thus is God's mysterious judgment to be justified when He shall arraign the guilt of that *unbelief* which at first appears so utterly removed from the sphere of voluntary and wilful sin; thus in every similar case, however apparently excusable, is He to stand approved of men and angels when he shall unravel all the tangled mesh of our excuses, and flash upon us the tremendous conviction, that we are lost only because we *would* be lost, that in every several instance of temptation the sin lay with us as the situation with God;—pursuing the trembling conscience into its loneliest retreats, crushing all its unhappy devices of self-deception, and forcing it (last, worst form of judgment!) to set its own seal upon its own condemnation.

Brethren! as you would escape that judgment, anticipate it! As you would stand clear with God, stand manifest to yourself! Shrink not from earnestly contemplating the ravages of the disease, if you would sincerely estimate the value of the remedy! I know it is no soothing theme of which I have to speak; but religion cannot for ever speak only of her rewards, and never of her conditions. If she promise eventually to lead to the "green pastures and the still waters" of holiness, present and eternal, the pathway

must sometimes lie through no pleasant land. There are times when it is the duty of the minister of Christ to lead men through the gloomy wards of the hospital of the heart, to unwind the bandage, and to expose the corruption it covers. It is but to forestall the judgment, which must accomplish the same office, if we neglect it. Is it not better, then, to do that in serenity, resolution, and sober hope, which else were assuredly done in hopeless, helpless, profitless remorse? And though I speak of the theme as gloomy, it is, after all, if rightly apprehended, but a *temporary* gloom; nor does the Apostle in the text represent it otherwise. *He* pauses not in the valley of the shadow; he passes onward to the region of light and peace beyond it. It is but the frowning form and the flaming sword that guards "the way of the tree of *life*." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; but *if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" But though glorious prospects may open in the distance, for the present we must be content in these our reflections to linger together among the shadows.

I. The Apostle declares, then, that the imagination of our own sinlessness is an inward lie. It has been much disputed, but I do not now delay minutely to inquire, whether he included in this affirmation the highest degrees of Christian attainment: a question of far more importance in systems of theology, than in the living art of practical godliness. The excellent person who, in the last century, principally insisted on this point, with the usual tendency of sectarian leaders (and assuredly, of all who ever bore that unhappy character, none should be named with gentler rebuke),—but with the inevitable tendency of all separatists to lose "the *proportion* of the faith," and to view the whole mystery of God in the heart of man in subservience to some special and favorite dogma,—really made the theological question of Christian perfectibility of far more

practical importance than it ever deserved. To believe or to deny the possibility of Christian "perfection" is to leave the motives of the spiritual life almost wholly unchanged, as long as each man believes (and who on any side doubts this?) that it is the unceasing duty of each to be as perfect as he *can*, and, in the holy ambition of yet completer conquest, to "think nothing gained while aught remains to gain." And surely, whatever may be the measure of sanctification which God bestows upon His children in this world, we can scarcely conceive its highest state unaccompanied with a longing for a state yet higher, clearly conceived, and sought with a personal consciousness (so far) of imperfection, and an ardent desire to still escape that remainder of earthliness that embarrasses the ascent. In fact, the belief of Christian perfectibility seems inapplicable to *individual practice* from the very nature of Christian holiness. Were a perfect man to exist, he himself would be the last to know it; for the highest stage of advancement is the lowest descent in *humility*. As long as this humility is necessary to the fulness of the Christian character, it would seem that it is of the essence of the constant growth in grace (however encouraged by holy joy and inward testimonies) to see itself lowlier as God exalts it higher. It is as one who stands by the margin of a lake, and gazes on his own image close beneath him; conceive this contemplator of himself borne gradually aloft towards the heavens, and the image which he still beholds as he soars will deepen in proportion as he rises! Besides this operation of humility, it must be remembered that the spiritual life, if it be a progressive life, involves a progressively increasing knowledge of God. Now, though the spirit of man assuredly must brighten in purity as thus in faith and love it approaches the great source of all holiness, it must also appreciate far more accurately the force of the *contrast* between itself and its mighty model; nay, its very adoration, apprehending, as

all affection does, more profoundly the excellencies of its object, must impress upon it its own comparative nothingness: and thus, as it becomes relatively more perfect, it may be said to feel itself absolutely less so. In truth, it is only piety, and piety fervent and exalted, that can really feel how immeasurably far it is from perfect holiness. There are distances so great that all calculation of distance is neglected or impossible. We cannot tell how far is the nearest fixed star, and we know that the mass of mankind would conjecture it a few miles at most; could we approach *nearer*, we should, for the first time, learn *how far* we were! Surely it is so with our religious estimates of approximation to the light and glory of God; the earth-born crowd afar, if they think at all of the matter, never dream themselves so darkly, so remotely exiled; it is only he who struggles nearer, and much nearer, that begins at length to perceive the true amount of the distance. And thus, whatever be the doctrine of Christian perfectibility collected out of this epistle of St John, it certainly can have but little relation to the earthly saint's estimate of *his own* piety; his ejaculation will still be with David,—“I will run the way of thy commandments, *when thou shalt* enlarge my heart;” “My soul cleaveth unto the dust; *quicken thou me* according to thy word;”—his highest offerings, as he contemplates those exceeding broad commandments that involve the whole sacrifice of the man to God, still appearing to himself all unworthy of the altar on which they are laid. He will scarcely dare to say, with the Holy One of God,—“I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do.”—John xvii. 4. Nay, I doubt not but it is the very genius of that divine *love* which is the bond of perfectness, to be lovingly dissatisfied with its own inadequacy: and such a worshipper in his best hours will feel that, though “love” be, indeed, as these divines so earnestly insist, “the *fulfilling* of the Law,” his love is itself imperfect, deficient in degree, and deficient in constancy; and that in this life it can, at

best, be only the germ of that charity which, "never-failing," is to form the moving principle of the life of eternity. And though he shed tears of humble gratitude to think that his Heavenly Master is pleased to accept such love as this, and even to call it, in a modified sense, a fulfilment of His Gospel Law, it does not appear that the believer's *consciousness of this fulfilment* (were it ever so absolute and complete) could itself form a practical motive of much importance in the Christian life. Let him be but assured, that the aspirations of his heart and the labors of his hand are a duty, and acceptable to God, and I cannot conceive that his aspirations will be less ardent or his labors less efficient, though he should hesitate to believe himself arrived at the fulness of evangelical perfection, and though he should still continue to appropriate the warning words of the text,—“If I say that I have *no sin*, I deceive myself,” and still joyfully reiterate the blessed sequel,—“but if I confess, He is faithful and just to forgive!”

But it is not of those, whom some would not only pronounce “perfect,” but enjoin to feel and know themselves such; it is not of those, who (as I would rather represent it) doubt all in themselves while they doubt nothing in Christ, that I have now to speak; it is not of those peaceful pilgrims of whom “the world,” that perhaps their presence preserves from ruin, “is not worthy,”—who find in their Lord the supplement of all their own infirmities, and as they rise to God love to lose themselves in his light; it is not of those whom “the law of the Spirit of life hath made free from the law of sin and death,” that I have this day to speak. Alas! the state of the Christian world does not suffer us long to dwell among these homes of holiness,—by that “river whose streams” still “make glad the city of God, the holy place of His tabernacles.” We must speak of those whose cold hearts and neglectful lives utter the bold denial of a sinlessness which the lips dare not deny; who “cry out of the *depths*,” indeed, but not for rescue or

redemption; who cannot know God as a Redeemer, for they cannot feel from *what* He is to redeem!

Adequately to enumerate the causes of this lamentable blindness to pressing and palpable evil, would be, of course, impossible. Being largely produced by mere indifference to the inquiry,—for men cannot know what they will not examine,—it must be increased by everything which tends to prolong that indifference, that is, by every worldly occupation whatsoever. And thus the particular cause of this delusion will vary with every variety of individual character. Every temptation that occupies, and by occupying excludes all other occupants, may claim its share in the perpetuation of this melancholy ignorance. The whole host of Satan are engaged to drug this opiate. All their enchantments are accessory to this, and result in this. And as this tumult of occupation is itself one of the most usual means by which the remonstrances of conscience are overborne, and scope thereby given to self-love to repose in the security of its own fictitious innocence, we may affirm that, under the incessant influence of this latter principle, these occupations are made the means of even the more deliberate presumption which the text supposes;—that they all equally, though indirectly, help the sinner on to feel, if he dare not say,—that he may (in the terrible words of the Lawgiver of Israel) “hear the words of the curse, and bless himself in his heart, saying, *I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart!*” (Deut. xxix. 19); or with the guilty Israelites in the Prophet (Hos. xii. 8), “I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin!” “I counsel thee,” said the warning Spirit to such boasters in a later day, “to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest *see.*”—Rev. iii. 18. It was the early impulse of the sinners of Eden to know their nakedness and flee to hide it; but it would seem that, in this spiritual destitution, men may cry “that they have need of

nothing, and *know not* that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!"—Rev. v. 17.

It would be vain, therefore, to think of specifying the particular causes of the evil; we can only speak of some of the general principles on which it rests.

II. In attempting, then, some such brief exposure of the sources of this lamentable ignorance of our personal state with God, of the power of that deluding voice that evermore whispers us "we have no sin,"—it will, of course, be unnecessary to enforce at any length, that the whole mystery of deceit must be primarily referred to the governing agency of Satan,—in this sense, as in every other, "the ruler of the *darkness* of this world." That that tremendous antagonist of human happiness stands concealed behind the entire machinery of evil, no one can doubt, who is not disposed to question the whole revealed account of the personages of the spiritual world. It is a living spirit with whom we have to contend, as it is a "living God" whom we have to aid us. It is no abstract law or ideal conception of evil, as some have dared to theorize; but a Being personal, and conscious, and distinctively active, as ourselves, though with faculties immeasurably beyond us;—a Being profound in purpose, subtle in arrangement, bold in enterprise, undaunted in execution; a Being who knows us far better than we know ourselves, and hates us far more intensely than even his worst inspirations have instigated us to hate one another; a Being whose compass of possible activity, extending through every region where temptation can extend, seems for a time permitted to span the universe, and even (if we may dare to interpret certain mysterious intimations of Holy Writ) to darken, by his occasional presence, for some unfathomable purpose, the council-chamber of the Omnipotent Himself. Satan, then, is the prime efficient cause of this lethargy; he who deceives that he may destroy, stupefies that he may deceive; the cunning of the Serpent alone can reach the master-subtlety of making

the soul of man do his work by being its own un pitying enemy, and traitor, and cheat; it is only the "father of lies" that thus can make the wretched heart a liar to itself.

But, then, it is certain, that as God is pleased to work by means, and to approach circuitously to His ends, so, still more, is His enemy bound to the same law; and that, therefore, as the Creator's path of light, through providence and grace, is occasionally discoverable by experience, and directed on principles already prepared to His almighty purposes, so also may the crooked ways of the Evil One, similarly adjusted, be similarly sought and known. Miracles for evil, any more than miracles for good, are not to be anticipated in the ordinary ways of human life; instantaneous strokes of spiritual ruin are as unusual as instantaneous gifts of spiritual perfection. It is not more Satan who destroys us, than we who destroy ourselves at his bidding. Even in his boldest achievements, he still does not create but pervert; he is to the last a subordinate and permissive agent in the territory of God. It is not to infuse new powers that he labors, but by every art to corrupt and poison the old to ruin!

1. The first and darkest of his works on earth is also the first and deepest fountain of the misfortune we are now lamenting,—the original and inherited CORRUPTION OF THE HUMAN SOUL ITSELF. It is ignorant of sin, just because it is naturally *sinful*. There is a sense in which it may be said that "the heart knoweth" *not* "its own bitterness." Faint, frail, and disordered from the first, how should it easily suspect its own disease? inexperienced in the better, how should it dream that a better exists? Though, as some have imagined in fanciful theories of education, you could preserve it from every tincture of outward evil, you cannot stanch the bitter fountain of the heart itself, the well of water springing up unto everlasting death; though you could banish every temptation to actual guilt from

abroad, and should sedulously leave it to its own workings, in precluding positive crime, you would have left unsupplied a positive deficiency. One chief object of the Gospel history, as applied by the Spirit of God, is to humble and yet animate us by a portraiture of moral excellence, which, as observation cannot furnish, so assuredly Nature will never spontaneously imagine. We cannot know our degradation, we cannot struggle, or even wish, to rise, if we have never been led to conceive the possibility of a state higher than our own. How, then, is man's spirit, of its own accord, to devise that bright ideal of purity which is to convince it by *contrast* that it "hath sin," and sin's feebleness, within it, indisposing it for strenuous effort, and dissuading it from holy thought? Will it learn, untaught, its own immortal destinies, wake to the mystic voices that call evermore upon the fallen child of heaven, and anticipate eternity? Will it know itself under foreign tyranny, and groan for deliverance, and *imagine* a Saviour? Ask Nature what she has done for the lonely child of the forest and the prairie; has she ever taught *him* to recognize the true immensity of his heritage, or to feel that, degraded as it is, he wears a nature that a God need not refuse to wear? Or does not he,—as all,—turn from the heavens above him to his kindred earth, and (though few may be his outward solicitings to guilt) "say to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister!"—Job xvii. 14. Nature can teach discontent with this world, but there her lesson well nigh closes; she talks but vaguely, and feebly, and falsely of another! Now, if this be so, have we not for this mournful unconsciousness of our personal depravity a powerful cause in *that depravity itself*? Will you not learn that it is idle to argue, "we *cannot* be the guilty things that preachers would make us, or we should inevitably feel the discord intolerable," when you remember that the heart was originally pitched for no other music? Will you not know that a violent effort alone can

suffice to wake, when the whole bent of nature weighs us down to slumber?

2. So far, then, it appears that Nature, herself prone to sin, may be expected, in virtue of that very tendency, to tell us "we have no sin," and that, therefore, her evidence is to be received with suspicion; but it must next be remembered that, properly speaking, no human being can be seen in this state of nature alone. Could we address our commissioned message to mankind as they come from the hand of "Nature," we should feel indeed that we had to discharge no easy task; to tell them of unsuspected evil, of the implanted seeds of that upas tree of the heart, which, unless cast out in the seed, must yet spread and poison so widely in the leaf,—of efforts unthought of that *must* be made:—but yet we could address them with hope and cheerfulness. But it is not thus we meet man. He is far advanced upon his way before his steps are arrested. Repeated acts are become principles of action, and every man is the creature of his own past life. If Nature alone,—treacherous and degraded nature,—is silent in denouncing sin,—if she has no instinctive power to arouse *herself*, what shall she be when doubly and trebly indurated by HABIT; when the malformed limb becomes *ossified*; when that faculty which was destined to be, under divine guidance, the antagonist of nature, "a second nature," as it is truly called, to reform, and resist, and overlay the first,—is perverted into the traitorous auxiliary of its corruption? We know not ourselves sinners, because from infancy we have breathed the atmosphere of sin; and we now breathe it, as we do the outward air, unceasingly, yet with scarcely a consciousness of the act! A man lives in the frigid formalism of external religion, or in the habitual *neglect* of God (itself a sin, and the parent of all sin), until it seems almost impossible to separate the habit from life itself; to live at all is to live *thus*; and he as little dreams of asking himself, can it indeed be true that he is a sinner calmly travelling

the pathway to ruin, as he does of seriously inquiring whether his heart beats, or whether his hair turns grey with years. The process has been so constant as to be forgotten, and has at length become almost equally independent of voluntary effort. He sins, so to speak, mechanically. The terrible power of irreligion, become thus habitual, to blind men to the momentous peril of their daily state, is above all evinced in this,—that every form of exhortation or appeal is weak to break the lethargy; yet not at all from any unbelief of the facts or doctrines stated, but from an obstinate refusal or inability to imagine that they can have the remotest reference to the hearer himself. Here, indeed, is a state which God alone can pronounce not hopeless. Such a man (do I not speak to your ordinary experience?) will listen to the declaration of the terrors and the promises of the Gospel; he will applaud the faithfulness of the preacher's unqualified delivery of his message; he will bring home to his listening family or friends the views and arguments he has heard, and even reflect laboriously and comment acutely upon their cogency, and pronounce himself gravely satisfied on all which has been established regarding the immutable requisitions of God, and the terrors of impending judgment, and the moment of time into which the fates of eternity are crowded; and yet, through the entire, never once entertain a shadow of suspicion that one sentence, one threat, one terror, was applicable to himself. Nay, he will himself be a preacher, an instructor of his fellow-men; he will admit that the *very blindness* of which we speak is an *universal* characteristic of human nature, yet suspect it not to be his own; he will declaim, in bitter severity, of public evil, yet never dream of private sin; he will own and lament the state of man in general, but never remember the state of one man in particular. His own sin is his own habit, but the sins of his fellow-creatures are not *his* habits; they, therefore, may become prominent objects of thought, while his personal

guilt (greater, it may be, in frequency and intensity), is an inseparable part of his very existence, and thence passes unnoticed into the mass of his ordinary life. The professional man, for example, who may become habituated to the use of falsehood or duplicity, as little knows how to disentangle this, even in *conception*, from the bulk and substance of his customary business,—to regard it as something separately and distinctively wrong,—as men think of mentally decomposing into their chemical constituents the common water or air, every time they imbibe them. The mass of men know *these*, as they know their own hearts, only in the gross and the compound. Is it not thus that constant habit persuades us “we have no sin” by making us unceasingly sin; and increases our self-content in direct proportion as it makes it more and more perilous?

Now, I have to entreat you to remember, that this operation of habit is an *universal* law; it belongs not to one man, nor to two men, but to mankind; nay, as far as experience or conjecture can reach, it belongs to the whole animated creation; and, therefore, you may be individually assured, that if you have never seriously estimated, or at least distrusted, its influence in disguising your hearts from themselves, you are yet utterly ignorant of the extent of your own personal need of mercy and forgiveness!

3. We have seen that sinful *nature* hides her own sin; we have seen that long and unbroken *habit* tells us “we have no sin” in the very work of multiplying and strengthening it; inquire if there be not something *further* about us, in the frame and condition of the world, that is fitted to assist this melancholy work of deception. The blind man does not conceive of light, neither does the godless spirit conceive of God. But even supposing the organ to be restored, were he placed in a *world of darkness*, he would be as far as ever from imagining the true nature of the light he could not witness; and when he heard of it,—let us suppose,—in certain periodic assemblies, as a thing which high

authority had declared to be glorious in itself and in its results; it might engage a moment's careless fancy; it might serve to talk of, as something very excellent, no doubt, but which no sensible man could ever waste his thoughts in expecting to experience; it might serve to add emphasis to an imprecation, or solemnity to an oath; but it is obvious that the wanderer of that dark world could entertain no true, or, however, no permanent conception of the extent of a deprivation which no one around him thought of lamenting, and scarcely one around him could describe. No one arrests that evil in himself which his eyes have never ceased to contemplate in others. Even follies that at first are odious lose their oppressiveness when we are surrounded with nothing else; as the enormous weight of the air becomes imperceptible by its pressure being universal. When we do judge of our own state, we test ourselves by the worst around us; when we judge of the state of others, we take care to compare it with the best qualities of ourselves. But in truth, most of us find little time for either comparison; society moulds us, and we (in our measure) mould society, with perfect unconsciousness on both sides. As men copy themselves by force of *habit*, they copy others by force of *example*; and both almost equally foster ignorance of the virulence of the evil they familiarize, and perpetually reconcile the sinner to himself. Mankind in crowds and communities tend to uniformity; as the torrents of a thousand hills, from as many different heights, meet to blend in one unbroken level. And in that union, the source of so much happiness and of so much guilt, each countenances the other to console himself; we are mutual flatterers only that the flattery may soothingly revert to our own corruptions. And if, at any moment, conscience should be stung to energy, its effort is short-lived; we faint and are crushed under the weight of a whole world of opposing example; the madness of a *world* assumes almost the authority of a law of nature; and it

seems as vain to resist the uniform pressure of all society, as it would be to lift a hand to arrest the revolution of the globe,—ourselves a portion of the mass we would arrest. Every seductive tendency to ease and self-content comes in to complete the charm; and as, before, we dreamed “we had no sin” because we had been sinning from our infancy, so now we cherish and confirm the dream, because all the world is as sinful as ourselves.

4. How the power of this *universality* of sin around us to paralyze the sensibility of conscience, is augmented by the influence of FASHION and of RANK,—not merely to silence its voice, but to bestow grace, and attraction, and authority upon deadly sin,—I need not now insist. I need not tell you that, so susceptible is man of this species of influence, so servile a copyist of evil, that vice, the darkest and the most degrading, seems to lose its name and nature when thus authenticated by the passport of rank. It would not be too much to say, that there is scarcely a crime conceivable which might not be thus transformed, or refined into a tolerated weakness, by the united effort of the upper orders of any country. Oh! that those who possess such a power would indeed awake to the responsibility it involves; that they would see that as all sin is reproductive, and none can end in itself, so their sin multiplies a thousandfold, till it work out its own likeness in every descending level of society! Philosophers tell us that the least oscillation in the system of the material universe propagates a secret thrill to its extremity; it is so in every act of social man; but the disorders of the upper classes are publicly and manifestly influential,—*they* are as if the central mass itself of the system were shaken loose, and all its retinue of dependent worlds hurled in confusion around it. How shall the poor man understand us, when we tell him of the slumbering demon of his own evil nature, if all that he has learned to revere unite to call that evil good? How shall we endeavor to disenshroud the darkness of the heart of

such an one, to force our way through all the obstacles that ignorance, and dulness, and thoughtlessness (the too certain characteristics of poverty) oppose, to rouse him to a sense of those high destinies for which it is our duty to train the humblest as laboriously as the loftiest,—if a voice that finds its echo in every crevice of the heart reiterate, that we speak of terrors that need not affright, and sins that are no sin? If the light that is in the earth be darkness, how great is *that* darkness! Surely it is among the most striking of the many evidences of the utter godlessness of the world which God has made, that we still grasp at power, when power is thus appallingly attended with responsibility; that we covet the very materials of our condemnation; that we strive after a position in the world's eye, which can only expose to a more terrible scrutiny from the eye of God; and are not contented, until we are cursed with a weight of obligation, that an angel could scarcely carry and be guiltless!

5. But to example and authority, thus enlisted in the ranks of evil, and thus fortifying the false security of our imaginary innocence, must be added such considerations as the tendency of PLEASURE itself, or of indolence, to prolong this deception, and our natural impatience of the PAIN of self-disapproval. That which is pleasing to soul or sense detaches from all but itself; it fixes and fascinates, and enfeebles as it fascinates. Still more effective is the other influence. Our Creator has given us the pain of self-condemnation to counterbalance the temptation to evil. A man will love the sin, yet shudder at the remorse that follows it. But there are no provisions in our nature which may not be wilfully impaired; and it would even seem that they are delicate in proportion to their excellence. The structure of the moral feelings is as tender as the structure of an eye or ear, and both are in a great measure put into our own keeping. Now you know there are two ways of casing an aching joint,—by healing its disease or by

paralyzing the limb. And there are two ways of escaping an angry conscience,—by ceasing from the evil that provokes it, or by resolutely refusing to hear its voice, which soon amounts to silencing it for ever. I am not to tell you which is the usual resource of guilty and neglectful hearts; I need not insist how powerful a persuasive to the belief that “we have no sin” must be this perpetual impulse to avoid the pain of thinking that we *have*; how natural the tendency is to turn away our weak and trembling eyes from that which we secretly feel we cannot steadily contemplate without sorrow, and perplexity, and dismay. Let this go on for a while, and gradually, but surely, the gloomy work is done; the troublesome censorer is mute; the light is put out, and the Evil One finds his proper home in the darkness!

And all this proceeds in mysterious silence! There are no immediate visible attestations of God’s displeasure to startle or affright. Among His judgments, as among His mercies, men are to walk for the most part, “by faith, and not by sight;” we must believe, not see our doom. And thus we wrest His very patience into a motive for contemning His majesty; “*for my name’s sake* will I defer mine anger, and for my *praise* will I refrain” (Isa. xlvi. 9); but we cannot understand a glory thus founded in compassionate endurance. “Because sentence against an evil work is *not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”—Eccles. viii. 11. All our customary conceptions of the justice of heaven are taken from the tribunals of earth, and on earth punishment ordinarily dogs the heels of crime. Hence, where the punishment is *not* direct, we forget that the guilt can have existed. “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;” and that silence is the ground of the corrupt and insulting inference that forms the sinner’s security; “thou thoughtest that *I was altogether such an one as thyself.*”—Ps. l. 21. “Have I not held my peace even of old, *and thou fearest me*

not?"—(Isa. lvii. 11); the merciful reluctance of our God to avenge, becoming itself the perpetual encouragement to despise or to forget the vengeance He delays. "Let favor," cries the Prophet, "be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness;" the "favor" being itself too certainly the reason, or the confirmation, of his thankless obstinacy!—Isa. xxvi. 10. The very immutability of the laws of visible nature, the ceaseless recurrence of those vast revolutions that make the annals of the physical universe, and the confidence that we instinctively entertain of the stability of the whole material system around us, while they are the ground of all our earthly blessings, and while they are, to the reason, a strong proof of divine superintendence, are as certainly, to the imagination, a constant means of deadening our impressions of the possibility or probability of divine interposition. Stricken, and it may be, perplexed or abashed for a moment, by the threats or the heart-searchings of the pulpit, men go forth beneath the open canopy of heaven, but all is peaceful there! They breathe freely! The nightmare of religious terror releases them. Oh! no, it *cannot* be that these hideous imaginings are real, while every object looks tranquillity, and every countenance is smiling. There is no "handwriting upon the wall" of Nature's Temple to countersign this tale of terrors. No voice from heaven authenticates the preacher's message; no consuming fire descends upon the guilty head; the voluptuary, the idolater of gain, the prosperous God-despiser, is not stricken in our streets; and the scoffing sceptic cries, of Jehovah (as the Prophet, of the idol god), "He is talking, or He is pursuing, or He is on a journey, or peradventure He sleepeth and must be awaked."—1 Kings xviii. 27. Awaked! He *will* awake! Surely the God will break forth at length from His hidden sanctuary, and break forth, as of old upon the Mount, "in fire and the smoke of a furnace."—Exod. xix. 18. The invisible shall once more be the visible, nor shall Moses alone have "seen the Lord face to face;" the

words and sentences of the immortal Book shall no longer be the breath of a man's voice, to which men listen from decency, and drop to slumber as they listen, but, themselves, shall breathe and live, realized in a divine world with a divine economy: "The Lord hath prepared His throne for judgment: and He *shall* judge the world in righteousness."—Ps. ix. 7, 8. And when that cycle that ends in judgment,—long, it may be, for the first act of an eternity may well be no dream of the morning,—shall have indeed come round, what, amid all the terrors of the day of wrath, shall move a deeper awe than *that* fatal frailty of our nature to which your thoughts have been this day directed? What more appalling to conceive than that unravelling of the subtlest intricacies of the heart's inward hypocrisy, man's shame uncovered to himself, his imaginary innocence exposed to the scoff of the tempter that suggested it, his darling deceits dragged forth and disgraced before his eyes? A search close, and deep, and penetrating as this, is the perpetual intimation of Scripture. "God shall judge *the secrets* of men."—Rom ii. "Every man's work shall be *made manifest*,"—(1 Cor. iii. 13), "tried by *fire*." "God will bring to light *the hidden things* of darkness."—1 Cor. iv. 5. The dead are "judged out of those things which are *written in the books*, according to their works."—Rev. xx. 12. Does not this speak of inquiry too keen to be baffled, too authentic to be deceived, too minute to be evaded? "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, *but God weigheth the spirits*."—Prov. xvi. 2. The wretch who was cast into outer darkness, for lack of the wedding-garment, evidently came in not dreaming of rejection. Again and again our Lord represents this perpetuation of self-ignorance to the very period of judgment, as one of the most terrible characteristics of that hour of terrors. Brethren! if I have this day, under God's blessing, prompted one of you to suspect the wiles of his own guilty nature,—if I have to any purpose impressed on you the certainty that "if you

say," or imagine, "you have no sin, you deceive yourselves," will you not, when you leave this house of prayer, leave it only to pray yet more earnestly in private to that God who can see what you cannot see, and urge the humble avowal and petition of the Psalmist: "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from *secret* faults! for thou hast set our iniquities before thee; our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."—Ps. xix. 12; xc. 8.

SERMON X.

THE ETERNAL LIFE OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN.¹

(Preached in the Chapel Royal, Dublin Castle, on Advent Sunday, 1842.)

Behold, I am alive for evermore.—REVELATION i. 18.

IT is Christ the Son of God who speaks these words. It is He who is “the Faithful Witness and the First Begotten of the Dead,” that thus declares His own triumph, and ours in His, after that, passing the grave and gate of death, He has reached his destined world of immortality. From thence, looking back once more with pitying love into the scene of His trials, He utters a voice strange and mysterious, a voice already solemnized to the tone of that invisible world upon which he has entered, a voice deep with the echoes of eternity, hard to catch or comprehend, as though it were a fragment of that “*new song* which no man can learn but they that are redeemed from the earth.”

This, indeed, is one of the characteristics that confer a peculiar interest on the Book of the Revelation. Christ speaks, it is true, by His Spirit in all Scripture; but here, for the first time after his ascension to glory, if we set aside those brief addresses to St Paul, we have Him speaking *in His own person* to the mortal followers He left

¹ This sermon was first printed in “Sermons for Sundays, Festivals and Fasts, and other Liturgical Occasions.” Edited by the Rev. Alexander Watson, Curate of St. John’s, Cheltenham. Masters: London.

behind Him. The veil of heaven is undrawn; He is alone with His beloved as of old. But a change has passed over Him since the times of Capernaum and Bethany. He has selected for the interview that dear associate who was wont to recline in His bosom; but now "the disciple whom Jesus loved," trembling and overpowered, "falls at his feet as dead." The Man of Sorrows now flashes insufferable brightness from eyes which are "as a flame of fire,"—"His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. He hath in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength." The change of language is not less wonderful than the change of appearance. St John, in his Gospel record, loves to transcribe the tenderest expressions and actions of his Lord; St John, in his Apocalypse, is all majesty, ecstasy, reverence, and awe. It was once, "little children! yet a little time and I am with you;" it is now, "I am the First and the Last,—He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore!"

Yet notwithstanding all this pomp of celestial grandeur, how remarkable is the minuteness of anxiety which the messages of this wonderful Being manifest; how little is forgotten or overlooked in His vigilant and capacious survey! He is represented as walking *in the midst of* seven golden lamps, which are Churches, to typify His indwelling presence and pervading care; and each Church is warned with a precision and particularity, that evince how impossible it is to evade His scrutiny, or defeat His purposes of retribution. The joys of the heavenly world have not distracted His attention from His earthly charge. Special heresies, false and unauthorized teachers, lack of discipline, growing neglect,—all are noted and admonished; even as we cannot doubt that, at this hour, yea, in this very house of prayer, the same invisible Censor is awfully present amongst us, noting our state as a Church, and our deeds as

its individual members. What His present relations may be to other worlds,—to the vast universe of worlds that spreads around us through the infinitude of space,—we know not, nor can conjecture; but we *do* know that His relation to *us* is as intimate and incessant as if no other object existed to occupy His thoughts. In His highest glory we are all personally interested; for it is the representative and champion of our race that is thus glorified; in Him we are virtually enthroned,—“kings and priests unto God and His Father.” Yea, even now the more the parties sever, the closer the knot is bound. In the passage before us, the very majesty of His celestial state, far from forming a ground of separation, seems made the ground of consolation and *confidence* to His poor disciples; when St John sank in lifeless terror before the apparition of His glorified Master, the divine visitant did not abridge the splendors of His presence, but gave the disciple strength to endure them: to allay the shrinking Apostle’s fears, He did not (as we might, perhaps, expect) speak of past humiliation, but of present glory. He did not diminish, but *assert*, the full magnificence of His claims, and fixed them as the basis of a high and holy trust:—“*Fear not! I am the First and the Last!*”

But all His powers and privileges of being our eternal governor, guide, and friend, are founded in the great declaration of the text: “I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, *I am alive for evermore!*”

At this holy season we profess more specially to discipline our hearts and minds for His coming. Is it not well, then, that we consider the purposes of His present glorious life in Heaven, no less than of His former lowly life on earth; is it not well that, “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day,” we should endeavor to rise to the grandeur of His actual authority in Heaven, in order that we may, however feebly, learn to estimate what is indeed that state from which He is to come among us, and of which He is, by

that last triumphant Advent, to make us the everlasting partakers?

You will not think it prolix or uninteresting, if I go back to the ideas that lie at the foundation of the subject, in order to bring you gradually to conceive it.

The great features of the Christian Revelation are familiar to us all. Facts are delivered to us in the New Testament, and their reasons sufficiently assigned to enable us to collect from the page of Scripture these mysterious truths: that whereas a Being exists through eternity as the sole Cause and Author of all, it became necessary, in order to His purposes, that this Being should in some inconceivable way descend into the limitations of the world of time, that He should unite Himself specially with humanity, should thenceforward be inseparably associated with it, and should, in virtue of that association, be empowered to carry a portion of its possessors, by Him duly gifted for the purpose, through all the glorious fortunes of His own human immortality.

Now if any man ask me to *account for* these facts, to reduce them to any known principles, to show how they are necessarily bound up with the facts and principles of our own daily experience, I candidly confess that I can go but little way in any such speculation. Gleams of light may here and there be caught by persevering reason, but they are *only* gleams; “since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one *that was born* blind;” and till natural reason expands into supernatural vision, we must still be content to “walk by faith, and *not* by sight.” These facts of the Scripture story concern death and life, misery and blessedness; and perhaps if we knew the full nature of *these*,—in what it is they consist,—we might be able to see how Christ’s marvellous interference is *necessarily connected* with them; but of these, though we see much, we *know* little or nothing. The course of nature, and of that better nature which we term grace,—being the

outward manifestation of the secret laws of God, revolves around us like some vast and various panorama; we can see the mutual relations of the objects, mark their positions and their recurrences; but the grounds and reasons of the whole, the mind of the artist, the disposition of the mechanism, *this* passes the eye, *this* lies deeper than the visible surface, and to those who cannot move from their appointed post, who can only see, not touch or handle, it is, and it must remain, inscrutable.

However, the case is less hopeless, when, instead of attempting to scrutinize the last reasons of these sublime dispensations, we endeavor to observe and methodize what Revelation has declared concerning them. In this point of view, we can perceive that Christ, who "liveth for evermore," is set forth in two great characters, in both of which His eternal life in glory is momentous to our interests.

In every theology the world has ever known or imagined, it has been in some form or other acknowledged, that there is carried on in this world a conflict between opposite principles of good and evil. To all who admit that the visible world is under *any* invisible control, this truth is so manifest that it has forced itself upon every observer, and become embodied in every religious system. The most general, though figurative, enunciation of this truth is to be found in those theories, spread through nearly all oriental countries, which speak of a warfare between *light* and *darkness*; a phraseology employed in inspired Scripture, and thence, probably, in ancient times, borrowed, exaggerated, and travestied by pagan and heretical teachers. However represented, however distorted, the fact is certain; we feel it within us, around us, above us, beneath us; every department of nature, by turns, is seen or felt to be a part of the vast battle-field, on which incessantly rages a contest, to which reason is perplexed in attempting to assign either beginning or termination.

Now, when through the intricacy of the engagement we endeavor to penetrate to the parties engaged, we cannot hesitate to perceive that the powers of evil consist of two great detachments, which speculative men have called physical and moral evil, which plain people are familiar with under the titles of pain and guilt,—pain, which seems naturally to tend to weakness and *death*; and guilt, which by a process as natural, descends into habitual and *irremediable sin*. Distinct as are these two forms of evil, even in our own experience we detect traces of a *connection* between them; but it is to Revelation that we are indebted for the clearest intimation of their secret but indissoluble association; to Revelation, which announces that *physical* infirmity and death entered our human creation in the footsteps of wilful *sin*, that wilful *sin* is the forerunner of *pains* eternal.

To these powers, then, the two great engines of the Adversary, Christ is revealed as the counteracting agent. He came to triumph over both; His work is respectively directed to each. In relation to *sin*, He is a mediator of justification and holiness; in relation to *death and pain*, He is the author of endless life and glory. In relation to both, it is our security and our blessedness, that He is “alive for evermore.”

My immediate business, then, is to assist you to reflect how the immortality of Christ in heaven bears upon both these particulars.

I. As regards the conflict with sin, He justifies and sanctifies. Both are based upon the redemption through *blood*; it is the sacrifice that gives our Mediator the right, either to vindicate or to purify His faithful. And of both the dispensation is secured by a “life for evermore.”

1. How then is the perpetuity of Christ in heaven connected with the work of our *justification*?

The Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews shows us, at great length, the immeasurable superiority of the dispensa-

tion of Christ to the typical dispensation of Aaron and his descendants. He shows us that the covenant of Christ is better, for it is a covenant of grace; the consecration of Christ better, for it was attested with the solemnity of a divine oath; the tabernacle of Christ better, for it is the eternal heaven; the sacrifice of Christ better, for it alone can truly take away sins; the priesthood of Christ better, for it is everlasting, after the order of Melchisedek. In the Apostle's discussion of these last two particulars, there emerges, however, an apparent difficulty. He establishes the pre-eminence of the sacrifice and the priesthood, by insisting on the *singleness* of the sacrifice, and the *perpetuity* of the priesthood. On the one hand he declares, that "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many," that "*by one offering* He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," that "*there is no more offering* for sin." On the other hand he affirms, that the divine priest of this sacrifice is constituted priest "after the power of an *endless life*," in distinction from the perishing descendants of Aaron; that He is a "*priest forever*," that He hath an "*intransmissible* priesthood," because He "*continueth ever*;" that He is, in this priestly office, "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He *ever liveth* to make intercession for them." This priesthood of Christ, then, being *perpetual*, yet employing but a *single* sacrificial act, it must consist in a constant reference to that sacrifice, of which His own blessed person stands in heaven as the undying memorial. Our first free remission in baptism, our subsequent pardon of daily transgression by repentant faith, our felicity for eternity (so far as it results on acquittal of guilt), all are issued from the treasury of celestial grace, in virtue of this repeated exhibition of the justifying presence of Christ. It is thus that He was "*raised* for our justification;" thus that He is a "*priest upon His throne*;" thus that "*we are saved by His life*;"—this constant manifestation in heaven exactly correspond-

ing to the memorial which we offer in the earthly kingdom of Christ, in that most solemn act of religion, which, in the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, represents His sacrifice to the sight of God. He became human that he might save; His perpetuated humanity is, then, in heaven, the token and warrant of salvation, the vestment of the divine priesthood; that we should be there recognized as blessed, it is enough that the Son of God be there recognized a man. In this view how deeply interesting is it to contemplate those mystical pictures which the New Testament now and then gives us of His occupations in that wondrous abode! The interests of the universe are dependent on His fiat, yet amid all those complicated interests, He is still a man, and busy for men. At those majestic levees, where He, "by whom the worlds were made," surrounds His throne with the directing powers of the innumerable orbs He first summoned into being, amid the glittering millions that encompass Him, the marvellous tale is whispered that the Sovereign of all that infinity of glory has yet a bond of special and thrilling tenderness, that links Him with one little province in creation. Our names are spoken of with awe. The *human* heir of eternal life is regarded as something altogether peculiar and consecrated. Angels look forward with eager interest to the hour when they who by so singular a connection are now "one with Christ," shall enter into the visible unity of His eternal kingdom!

2. But in relation to His overthrow of sin, the eternal life of Christ in heaven is yet more directly the fountain of blessing to us, in being the immediate source, not only of justification, but of *holiness*; not only of gracious acceptance into the favor of God, but of all the bright train of inward graces, by which that favor effectuates itself in us.

It is the perpetual lesson of Scripture, that we should fix our hearts in entire dependence on Christ Jesus.

“Without me ye can do nothing,” is the warning of Christ to His followers in every age as well as the Apostolic. He suspends us on Himself for our whole spiritual existence; He will have us trace every emotion of faith, hope, and love, to His bounty. We know the force of ordinary human attachments, how self seems annihilated, the whole being merged and lost in the being of another; but what an attachment is this, where not only the object is given us, but the feelings that are to meet and embrace the object. This He effects by that wondrous indwelling with which He has promised to purify our nature into kindred, into sameness with His own; it is the Christ within the heart that seeks and covets the Christ beyond it!

Now this communication is no less necessary in heaven than on earth. He must, therefore, be alive not only now, but “evermore;” because He is to preserve us in this state for evermore. If the holiness be everlasting, the source that supplies it must be everlasting too. You must not look upon these affections as temporary; as though the feelings of the Christian towards his Redeemer were but elements of the present preparatory state, and unnecessary or superseded in the world of glory. We have no reason to suppose that the dependence on Christ shall ever cease; our very exaltation shall be but to feel that dependence more nearly, to lean on that arm more trustingly, to look up to those divine eyes with more affectionate confidence. Not only in the dreary desert, but “coming *up from* the wilderness,” the bride in the mystical song is supported by her beloved. The Lamb who on earth was declared to be “the Light of the world,” is in heaven equally declared to be “the Light *thereof*.” In the infinite progression of holiness that belongs to an infinite existence of glory, we shall be but drawing more and more freely from an infinite source; the Holy One that “inhabiteth eternity” is inexhaustible as the eternity He inhabits. Christ is as necessary to the heavenliness of heaven, as He is to the holiness of

earth. In the very height and rapture of the sanctity of heaven, when every thought of all its radiant multitudes is captive to the obedience of Christ, and knows its happiness only in that blessed bondage, were the horrid conception possible that Christ Himself should suddenly cease to exist, that instant every ray of its holiness would expire; not merely the heart would seek *in vain* its resting-place, it would no longer possess the *desire* to seek it: not merely the light would be *wasted* in the void abyss, it would be *quenched* utterly and forever!

He, then, that is "alive for evermore," is thus alive that He may be to us the everlasting fountain of holiness. The abiding sanctity of His nature is the condition of ours. In the eternal laws of the divine reason, it is decreed that Christ shall be the authorized dispenser of spiritual blessedness to His redeemed; that every grace shall flow through this channel, or cease to flow; and to this law, universal in the world of time and sense, eternity can bring no termination, heaven present no exception. The memorable declaration of St Paul may, indeed, occur to you, where He tells us how the Son, having Himself subdued all things, shall "become subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." But if there come a period when as Mediatorial Governor the Son shall "deliver up the *kingdom* to the Father," and as human shall be to Him "subject," it is also as certainly declared that He and His shall "*reign* for ever and ever," His divinity still perpetuating His essential sovereignty to Himself and indirectly to them: nor, though the functions of Christ as the regal guide and guardian of His Church in its corporate capacity shall terminate when the need of that guardianship expires in the great consummation which St Paul designates "the end," does this give us reason to doubt that even in that blessed period when "God shall be all in all," the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Man Christ Jesus, shall still continue to us, as individuals, the immediate conveyor

of spiritual strength and peace. He may resign His office, no longer needed, of delegated administrator of the empire of God; but our deeper spiritual union with Him shall never be dissolved or weakened. Once His, we are His for ever.

Thus we have seen how it is that the eternal life of Christ Himself in heaven is the warrant of the eternal overthrow of sin,—alike of sin in its condemnation, and of sin in its inherency. On His life is suspended the prostration of moral evil in the universe. It shall continue to exist, but only as the dark monument of His triumph; it shall exist, but in chains, and feebleness, and defeat.

II. And now you must permit me to direct your view to the other aspect of this great subject, to that which regards *physical evil*,—pain and death, the result of sin, but from sin distinct; and to invite you to behold Him who is “alive for evermore,” alive as the eternal antagonist and conqueror of these gloomy powers. It is a blessed thing to worship Him as the Source of acceptance and holiness; it is not less a privilege to see in Him the radiant centre of life itself and happiness, to all that truly lives.

When the Lord appeared in this ecstatic vision to St John, and announced His own immortality, he declared it the prerogative of that immortality, that He held “the keys of death and of Hades;” that is, that He possessed the power of liberating from the bonds of death those who were, or were to be, confined in that intermediate state,—or “guard-house,” as St Peter calls it,—which, as we may collect from Rev. xx. 13, extends its privilege of restriction over all human spirits, from the mortal hour to the day of the great white throne and the final judgment.

In Scripture we know that human death is declared to be the result of human sin; the result in each instance of a curse perpetuated from Adam. We are told that “sin hath reigned *unto* death,” that “sin entered into the world, and death *by* sin,” that the condemning law is “the law of sin,

and death," that the author of sin is "he that had *the power of death.*" That eternal overthrow, then, of sin, by the eternal life of Christ, of which we have already spoken, naturally *involves* the overthrow of that which is but a consequence of sin; and the conquest of death, again, is the conquest of all,—pain, disquietude, disease,—that disposes to it, and in it ultimately terminates. But the Scriptures are more direct in their intimations. They set before us "death" as manifested in two forms; and Christ as the destroyer of one, the ruler and restrictor of the other. These are mysteriously entitled "the first" and the "second" death; both, as we may infer from the sameness of the name, successive developments, first on a less, afterwards on a vaster and more terrible scale, of that common principle, whatever it be, of death which is the original and stated "wages of sin." The first form of death results on the sin of nature, and is therefore universal as *it is*; the second form, which perhaps is naturally the sequel or maturity of the former, is, by the mercy of God, restricted to unpardoned guilt. To both, Christ, "who is our life," is the appointed adversary, and over both He triumphs, though in different ways; over the *first* by raising all mankind, over the *second* by conducting His faithful to glory. And in every stage of the fortunes of these His ransomed followers, He is Himself their forerunner; asserting His supremacy through every form of existence by *entering* it, and carrying the principle of life which was within Him victoriously through them all. Having been born as we are, He died as we must die, entered the region of departed souls as we must, rose from that state as we are to rise, ascended to heaven as His servants shall yet ascend. Through every stage before the last, mankind, in the mere changes of existence, accompany Him; in the last, He and His stand separate and alone. An awful balance *then* remains, a terrible residue to be placed to the account of the principle and power of evil; a residue so terrible as to

urge us to exclaim, is "Death," indeed, "swallowed up in victory" with such a tribute as this, of miserable spirits, paid into the gloomy treasury of "the second death"? And we can only answer, that the boundless power of Christ being sufficiently manifested in the salvation of the blessed, His mysterious *justice* waives the prosecution of His conquest; while Death and Hades being (in the strong expression of inspiration) "*cast into the lake of fire,*" merged in their own horrible consummation, they are thereby declared to be *limited* for all eternity to that dark realm. Thus the eternity of torment, mysterious and terrible as it doubtless is, in nowise affects the universality of Christ's victory over the powers of evil. Christ, Himself exalted to glory, fixes the barriers to the energies of pain and death; annihilates not the foe, but imprisons him; makes him the accursed minister of His own dread vengeance; and publicly manifests to the universe, that if misery exist, it exists only as a permitted agent in the awful administration of God. He, the source of life, is still *predominant* over all, and known to be so; known yet more deeply to be so as the life He gives is mantling around Him into intenser glory. Life and happiness again are one; for happiness is bound up in the very essence and nature of the life that Christ bestows; they are inseparable as substance and quality, as the surface and its color!

In truth, there is an eternal alliance, in the primitive counsel of God, between life and happiness, of which faint shadowings are sometimes caught on earth, but which is fully solemnized in heaven,—in the marriage of the Lamb,—alone. For even in earth beings are made alive *in order* to be happy; this *is* the original law and the general rule; the opposing instances, manifold as they be, are all exceptions, the clear results of *supervening* evil. The weakest eye (so it be "single") can detect that these miseries are no part of the original Divine Ideal, but intrusions of some darker foreign element: unforbidden of God, they

are yet not from God. There is no instance producible,—setting aside manifest disease and displacement,—of a living creature expressly organized by our Creator for a life of agony. He,—a Father to the children of His love,—He meant that life should be blessedness; if it be otherwise, “an enemy hath done this.” Would you apprehend how even our lost world retains dim traces of His purpose that Life and Happiness should be for ever one? Go forth into that world, though it is a sad world; gaze on that age which Christ Himself made the living symbol of His kingdom, to perpetuate a lovely tradition of heaven to every generation; behold the *child* when such as childhood should be, in the joyousness of that freedom he never again on earth must know; mark the delight of his young activities, the bliss of growing energies, the bright unsullied fancy, the cheerful confidence, the boundless hope; behold him—the little type of heaven—alone with nature in her summer noon, and asking nothing more of earth or sky than that the one should thus blossom, the other thus beam, for ever; and you will be able, in some faint way, to conceive how the mere consciousness of existence *may* be happiness. And thus Scripture, as if instinctively, uses the word “life” to imply felicity, and “eternal life” to imply eternal felicity; for in the first draft of creation to live was to be blest. Glorious alliance! it was bound on earth, when God saw that all here “was good;” it shall again be bound eternally in heaven, when He who is “*alive* for evermore” shall, in the power and diffusion of that life, spread around him happiness with it co-extensive and commingled; when the Sun of the celestial world, gathering round it all the revolving orbs of blessedness, shall shed from its inexhaustible depths not heat alone nor light alone, but heat and light inseparably blended, the heat that quickens all it touches into life, the light that irradiates that life to glory!

Oh! brethren, if this be indeed the power and the

purpose of Christ towards His elect; if he has willed thus to find His highest happiness in making us happy, and lives eternally that we may live; if such prospects as these be our covenanted inheritance,—everlasting communion with the very Lord of glory, immersion in the very fountain-head of life and light, capacities of knowledge and happiness increased, and still filled and satisfied as they increase, earthly sorrows forgotten, or remembered only that we may feel how they are consumed and lost in the bliss of His immediate presence,—if you, and I, and all of us are called,—still called to this, entreated by its very Author, besought by Christ Himself, as of old from the Cross, so now from the throne, to share it, and besought upon the one condition of turning to Him in simplicity and obedient love, that is, besought to be happy hereafter on the sole condition of being, in the purest and deepest sense, happy now,—what words can describe the folly, the fatuity, the madness of those who, professing to believe this truth, will not turn this truth to account,—will resolve,—and to delay is to resolve,—rather to cling to nothingness, emptiness, uncertainty,—to moments of ease, hours of unquiet, a cloudy day at best for their life, an everlasting midnight for their eternity,—than to seek the substance of immutable happiness in God, to bid boldly for this mighty prize, to attempt at last the diviner life, and, through good report and evil report,—for what matters the scorn of him whom God shall yet scorn?—through trial and danger,—for what *is* dangerous in competition with death eternal?—to seek the one sole aim of reasonable man,—the “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!”

So then, brethren, we have now seen,—as far as Scripture deigns to guide our feeble steps,—the mighty purposes of the eternity of Christ in heaven. We have learned to adore in that celestial life of His the source of pardon, of

holiness, and of bliss, immortal as itself. Every blessing that belongs to our inheritance centres in this great truth, that He "who was dead" is now "alive for evermore." In Him newly born, we in Him die, rise, and ascend; our life is the reflection of His; if spiritually quickened by Him, we too, like Him, are even now, and hereafter are destined yet more gloriously to be, "alive for evermore!"

"For evermore!" Words easily uttered, but in comprehension vaster than human thought can grasp, till man, entering upon eternity, shall rise to faculties fitted for the scene! "For evermore:" for an existence to which the age of the earth, of the starry heavens, of the whole vast universe, is less than a morning dream; for a life which, after the reiteration of millions of centuries, shall begin the endless race with the freshness of infancy, and all the eagerness that welcomes enjoyments ever new. The blight of all our earthly pleasures is decay; our suns have scarcely risen when they set; we have but just persuaded ourselves that we are happy when the happiness is vanished. Pining after something that will endure, we are not to be for ever disappointed; born for eternity, eternity shall surely be ours. But oh!—horrible thought!—if all this tendency to the eternal, this longing for everlasting mansions, be to any of us but the prophetic twilight, the forecast shadow of unending darkness! Oh! agony insufferable, if the eternal life of Christ,—the Christian's warrant of justification, of sanctity, of happiness,—be but the guarantee of a death as everlasting as His everlasting life; if the prolongation of His divine existence be but the seal and surety of that never-dying death which, by a dread union of opposites, seems described as protracting dissolution itself into immortality! Invoke not Christ in such an hour! All-merciful now, He *cannot* pity then; an inconceivable change shall have passed over His nature; and perhaps he is declared to resign "the kingdom" to the pure Godhead after the final judgment, for this very reason, that we may

know Him no longer able, as a man and brother, to compassionate and intercede. The love for sinners that fixed Him on the cross expires in the hour of judgment. Turn not away from these dread thoughts! The things are true whether we will receive them or not; our doubts or disbelief cannot shake the foundations of the throne of God. The time *shall* come,—we know not *when*, we know not *how*,—but come it shall, when every deathless spirit within these walls shall awake to the world of retribution, and each shall be enabled to utter for himself the words of Christ: “Behold *I* am alive for evermore;’ the hour at length is come, and I too am immortal! This is,—this *is* the light of eternity that glares around me; these *are* the anthems of angels!” *How* such words shall be uttered, whether with the anguish of anticipated woe, with the remembrance of years misspent, warnings despised, opportunities neglected; or with the blessed recollection of faith unwavering amid a hostile world, of tempers meek and loving in despite of all its bitterness, of temptations met and vanquished, of services that, never indeed sufficient, were still sincere,—those humble but rapturous recollections that in their fearful joy are bright already with the glory they herald;—*which*, I say, shall be your destiny when that long-promised morn shall have dawned, as under God it lies with yourselves, may God in His mercy enable you this day to resolve!

SERMON XI.

THE CANAANITE MOTHER A TYPE OF THE GENTILE CHURCH.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be unto thee even as thou wilt!—MATTHEW XV. 28.

THESE are the last words of Christ to one who had persevered to trust in His mercy, through silence, and exclusion, and reproach; who had beheld the flow of His boundless benevolence checked, and its glory clouded;—yet had penetration enough to detect the divine reality concealed under these harsh appearances, to read a willing heart through the veil of unwilling words, to believe in Him in spite of Himself, and, amid every assumption of coldness and severity, to see in Him the one unaltered incarnation of divine love. The woman of Canaan comes forth out of the depths of a dark and degrading idolatry, to be an example, forever, to the world of light, and privilege, and profession. A rescued heathen is chosen to be the model and instructress of the Church of the living God. He who, of old, went to “Ur of the Chaldees” to find a father for believers, has chosen his fairest and fullest example of Gospel faith from the worshippers of Baal and of Dagon. It is indeed deserving of remark, that the most eminent instances of faith in Christ’s claims and powers, recorded in the Gospel history, should have been found among the Gentile world; that of the centurion (of whom, even after the call of the Apostles, our Lord declares that

He had "not found so great faith, no not in Israel,") and the still more interesting case which the text brings before us. Everything in the life and actions of Christ is profound in purpose, and pregnant with meaning; and surely we can discover in *this* an ordinance of the most perfect propriety. If it be through the special virtue and dignity of the grace of *faith* that the new dispensation is enabled to make itself commensurate with the world, it seems peculiarly appropriate, that the chief examples of that grace, which was thus to equalize the claims of all the races of mankind, should have been selected from among those who were to gain the advantage in this equalization. This farther typical purport seems to have been present to our Lord's mind, when, after commenting on the Centurion's faith, he rose to that extension of it which was yet to embrace the world: "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the *children* of the kingdom shall be cast out." Nor, perhaps, is it altogether unworthy of notice in this point of view, that when the Church was indeed to be declared a Church of Gentile no less than Jew, the first believer,—the common ancestor of the world of evangelized heathen,—was a man holding the same office, and, it would appear, similarly connected in habits and disposition with the Jews; for as it is said of the Centurion of the Acts, that he was "one that feared God, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway,"—so is it likewise said of the Centurion of the Gospel, that "he *loved their nation*, and had built them a synagogue." And I may add that this respectful attachment to the ancient people of Jehovah is very discernible in the language of our immediate subject, the believing Canaanite; for she not only addressed her Redeemer in her supplication as "the Son of *David*" (a title which could appear honorable only to one who sympathized with the feelings and prepossessions of a Jew), but even

acceded to the justness of our Lord's strong expressions when He classed her nation as "dogs" in comparison with the long-adopted "children" of God. If this remark be well founded (that the prominent examples of the first heathen elect were purposely such as had some connection with Israel), it may, perhaps, be properly considered as a continuation of that wonderful dispensation of heaven, so observable through all ancient history, which made the prosperity or adversity of heathen nations depend largely on their treatment of the Jewish people, a dispensation which has rendered the Israelite prophets the anticipative historians of the chief empires of antiquity; a dispensation which, as the Jews are undoubtedly reserved for a mysterious future, may not, perhaps, have ceased so completely as we are apt to imagine. "Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, *and I will punish all that oppress them.*"—Jer. xxx. 18, 20. "Assemble yourselves, and come!" cries the Spirit of God by the Prophet Ezekiel (xxxix. 17); "gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth. . . . And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and *my hand that I have laid upon them.*" If these predictions refer to times and events not yet elapsed (as seems most probable), they would seem to show that the eye of God is not yet closed upon the oppressors of Judah (a crime of which nearly all European nations have at various times been flagrantly guilty), and that, like their own Ark wandering among the Philistines of old, they are a people whose indestructible consecration to heaven makes their presence among the nations of the earth even yet a mysterious element of trial

and perplexity. However this may be, the choice of the previous friends and reverers of Israel, as the special instances of Gentile faith in Christ, may be considered in a view beyond this ; not merely as a striking exemplification of that law of *gradual transition* which seems to pervade all the works of God, spiritual no less than physical,—the heathen being partially Judaized before he becomes wholly enlightened, but also as manifestly rendering these instances more appropriate types of the entire work of Gentile conversion :—externally, of the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen in all ages, which in all ages must include so large a Jewish element, must build itself upon Jewish history, authenticate itself by Jewish prophecy, and proclaim its great subject the fulfilment of Jewish types ; internally of the parallel story of the Gospel life in the soul, which, perhaps, finds every man more or less a Jew in heart, in pride, self-reliance, spiritual ignorance, and formality,—before it conducts him into the humility, the faith, the illumination, and the liberty of the Gospel. And thus, enlarging upon the subject, we might not, perhaps, refine overmuch, if we ventured to say that these two remarkable cases (the Centurion and the Canaanite), considered as recorded fruits of the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles in and adjacent to the immediate scene of His labors, may stand as fitting types of the two great divisions of the Gentile world, as designated from the sons of Noah :—the Roman Centurion, a child of Japhet ; the Canaanite mother, a daughter of Ham ; while the Jews themselves, the Lord's direct subjects, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” to whom he was “sent,” the seed of Abraham in whom the whole earth was to be blest, form ample representatives of that race of Shem, who only are wanting to complete the universal supremacy of Him to whom it was promised, “that *all* the ends of the world should turn unto him, and that all the kindreds of the nations should worship before him.” Thus, even during the earthly life and pilgrimage

of Christ, had the great branches, African, and eastern, and western, of His Catholic Church, their seminal representatives; single, and isolated, and obscure, it may be,—but the more answerable in this feebleness of their infancy to that “kingdom of heaven” which is like a grain of mustard-seed, “which is less than all the seeds that be in the earth; but when it is sown, it groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

Such a generalization as this, of simple Gospel incidents (which can scarcely be estimated, I beg leave to say, without patient and thoughtful comparison), seems to me perfectly warrantable. But as many prejudices, from various sources, lie against every attempt to see in Scripture more than Scripture expressly speaks, I will occupy the second division of this discourse with some brief considerations on the subject, which may prepare the way for an attempt,—simpler, perhaps, and plainer,—to penetrate the providential mystery of this Canaanite’s gift of faith.

I confess, then, that where so little is recorded of the most wondrous life in all history, I cannot forbear expecting depths of undeveloped mysteries in each of the few incidents selected for special memorial. And in this as in every other study, though men may indeed transgress by exaggeration, I fear the liability will always be much stronger to err by indolence, oversight, and neglect. It must, indeed, be evident to every one that the life of Christ is not given to us in the fashion, or for the purposes, of ordinary life-writing. The detached memoranda of the Evangelists answer to no such idea. We have no regular *diary* (though who can blame the curiosity that sometimes covets it?) of His sayings and His wanderings; far less have we the methodical elaborateness of a finished memoir. His story is cast less in the mould of a formal biography than as the successive, but separate, scenes of a majestic monodrama. A mystic shroud still envelopes the daily

walk of the Son of God. The Spirit speaks of Him with a holy and reverent reserve. So truly was this reserve decreed in the councils of heaven, that (wonderful as it surely is!) there is scarcely a fragment, beyond the Gospel narratives, preserved of the express words or deeds of Jesus; a fact unparalleled in all its circumstances. And when Satan (according to the usual law of imitation observable in his operations) prompted his unhappy agents among the early heretics, to overlay the true with false narratives,—an attempt renewed not long since by an English infidel, so that, like the shields in the Roman temple, the divine gift might be undistinguishable among its human imitations,—the watchful providence of God gradually discredited the whole of these forgeries, and left the four authentic records as the sole written inheritance of the Church, the spiritual aliment of every race and nation of man,—while it imprisoned their rivals among the dusty tomes of the learned, to magnify, by the contrast of their extravagancies, the inimitable workmanship of heaven. All has vanished of Him who “spake as never man spake,” but that which God expressly excepted; but this again supplies *another* wonder, from which I cannot pass without a moment’s notice. Mahomet was accustomed to appeal to the sublimity of his Koran (itself a pompous plagiarist from our Scriptures, as indeed his whole religion is a Christian *heresy*), in proof of the divinity of his mission; but lofty *imagery* is not very difficult to borrow or invent. Our Gospels (which surely are themselves of the highest order of the truest sublime) contain a characteristic far rarer than any sublimity of imaginative decoration. The hand only of a master can achieve the greatest “effect” in the fewest strokes; and is it not astonishing that a few scenes and a few discourses should convey an impression of the Actor and the Speaker more distinct and perfect, perhaps, than has ever been conveyed of any man eminent in the world’s history, by the most voluminous biography?—so that every one (as far as natu-

ral apprehensions can reach) understands "the mind that was in Christ Jesus,"—knows how that blessed Personage would feel and act in any ordinary conjuncture of life,—would be prepared to meet His daily habits and to enter into His line of conversation,—more securely and completely (and this from a calm perusal of the Gospels alone) than he could engage to do with any subject of the most copious historical record,—nay (such is the irresistible conviction of *His* unrivalled singleness and sincerity!) than he could, perhaps, attempt with his most intimate and trusted friend. And this (you will remember) such a character as, in all its blended ingredients,—so new, yet so harmonious,—the world had never seen before, and has seen in but rare and feeble imitations since. And hence, though the records are so few and brief, they are (by a marvellous conciliation of difficulties) abundant for the great purpose of *example*. But to follow *this* topic would lead me too far; and I am now speaking not so much of what we can *copy* as of what we can only *contemplate*. If, then, in this limited history which the Gospel supplies, we find the *miracles* of Christ related in very different forms,—sometimes aggregated in a constellation of mercies ("they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them; and devils also came out of many" (Luke iv. 40, 41): or, "a great multitude of people came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases, and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all" (vi. 17–19, &c. &c.)), sometimes set forth with a minute speciality of place, and time, and manner,—we cannot but suspect that the presiding Spirit that governed the composition of the four great records of the life of Christ must have had His reasons for the difference. We cannot but feel ourselves justified in seeking for those reasons below the surface, nor are we to be deterred by the opposition of some and the extravagancies of others, from

expecting that, in many instances, it may be permitted to patient industry to seize them; though it be very possible (indeed I believe it altogether certain) that the *full* intelligence of these reasons may not be given until some future crisis of events—perhaps until the completion of the whole mystery of God—shall itself explain them. Many parts of the Holy Volume (as the temple of Ezekiel, and others not *professedly* prophetic) may then be found, though now regarded of so little relative importance, to be charged with the weightiest and most momentous practical truth. Doubtless we are, in some measure, as the Jews so long were, the conservators of treasures whose real force and scope we have never *entirely* mastered. That language of actions and events in which the Spirit of God loves to speak seems to be inexhaustible in meaning. The same event, that fulfils an ancient prophecy, often becomes itself a type that silently prophesies a series of future wonders. And thus, in a manner, God makes the history of the whole world His Scripture; and monarchs and empires, in their rise and their revolutions, the letters of His mystic page. But, of course, such considerations of the profound purport of revelation apply mainly to the written word of God, and chiefly encourage us in every honest effort to sound *its* depths. And I may add, that these considerations alone are an abundant answer to the objector, who smiles or sneers at the anxiety which the modern societies for the circulation of the Scriptures manifest, for the preservation of the *whole* volume in its unbroken integrity, so that all must be received or none; and who asks, what would public morals suffer though the book of Leviticus, and the Genealogies of the Chronicles, and the Song of Solomon, and the perplexing visions of Ezekiel or Zechariah, were lost forever to the public eye? The answer, I repeat, is simple and decisive. We are the pledged depositories of a treasure, the trustees for future ages; and as we have received, so must we transmit. We dare not measure the depth of God's purposes

by our penetration of them. The Church is the sworn executor of God's solemn bequest; and the honest executor dares not curtail the legacy because he fears that a part may be abused, and a part may bear no interest. If the Scriptures are to be preserved at all, and not left to the providential recovery of some future Hilkiab, it can only be (under God) by the multiplication of copies, and the stern principle of rescinding nothing which heaven has thought fit to perpetuate. Had the Jews acted on the short-sighted calculations of the objector, we should at this day have been without many of the most decisive prophetic authentications of Christ; for who would have dreamed that Zechariah's *thirty pieces of silver*, or his King lowly, *and riding on an ass*, were ever meant to find their minute fulfilments? Or who would have thought that Jeremiah's "Rachel weeping for her children," or Hosea's "out of Egypt I have called my Son," were (though realized in a lower sense at or near the times of these prophets) in truth but the dim reflections of mightier events not yet, nor for ages, to rise upon the dark horizon of time? And would not such passages have been (on the principle I am opposing) among the first condemned to inferiority, removed from popular inspection, and thus exposed to gradual neglect and ultimate disappearance?

From these suggestions in confirmation of the truth, more and more to be evinced by circumstances and events,—that "*all* Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction," and, more especially, of the value and depth of every line, which tells us of the doings of our Lord, at once the giver and fulfiller of the whole, "the *Author* and the *Finisher* of the Faith,"—we return once more to our immediate subject, and endeavor to resume the consideration of the important instance the text brings before us,—itself an emblem or symbol for all ages of the expansion of Jewish privilege into Gentile adoption, of the steps by which the Lord is pleased to

work this merciful providence, and the grounds and conditions which He requires in those who obtain its benefits. Let us, then, omitting all comparisons of other miracles, or other interviews, with this, confine ourselves to it alone. We shall find it abundantly adequate to represent the whole mystery of heathen salvation; to picture the Church (already in mysterious prospect co-extensive with every clime and family of man) approaching humbly and believingly the Lord of all, and soliciting from Him who cannot refuse the prayer of faith, the permission, on behalf of enslaved thousands, to become His emancipated servants.

I call your attention, in the first place, to the *race and country* of the believing mother in the narrative. This is expressed, with some variety of phrase, though substantial sameness, in the two Gospels of Matthew and Mark, in which the event is recorded (with great propriety if Matthew's Gospel was, as learned men conclude, mainly intended for the *Jews*, and Mark's for the *Gentiles*, both of whom were equally concerned in the incident). The variety, however, is most instructive in relation to our present purpose. Christ is said to have "departed to the coasts" or "borders of *Tyre and Sidon*," and the woman to have "come out of the same coasts." St Matthew adds that she was "a woman of *Canaan*." And St Mark tells us that she was to be considered "a *Greek*" (that is in religion and habits), "a *Syro-Phœnician* by nation." Now, I request you to sum up these brief notes of country and origin; and I mistake, or you will find them to embrace every great division of the then known Gentile world, considered as to *position* relatively to Israel; and, still more, regarded (as the Old Testament Prophets always regard them) with a view to their open hostility, or hollow and treacherous alliances,—on which heaven always frowned,—with the original people of God, for whom these idolatrous enemies were now to be substituted. Tyre and Sidon, which lay to the *north* of the sacred territory (though in remote anti-

quity on terms of alliance), had long become the persecutors of the chosen people; as you discover in the triumphant denunciations of Isaiah and Ezekiel, mingled now and then with a singular strain of promise. It was the old prediction of the Psalmist that the "daughter of Tyre" should be present with a gift at the nuptials of the Messiah's spouse; and Isaiah, though he bids "the ships of Tarshish howl" for wasted Tyre (ch. xxiii.), yet promises that a time would come when "her merchandise and her hire should be holiness to the Lord." But the woman in the story is further declared to be of *Canaan*; a child at once of that accursed race in whose room the chosen people (now to be forsaken) had of old been planted, and in Canaan of that "Ham, the father of Canaan," who stands in the prophets as the representative of Egypt, and, more or less, of the entire *south*. But she is also "a Syro-Phœnician," not merely of Phœnicia in its Canaanitish, but of Phœnicia in its Syrian aspect;—of that Syria, then, which not only had so often, in its limited acceptation, been the foe of Israel, and thence bears in Isaiah the bitter "burden of Damascus," but which, some 300 years before Christ's coming, had merged in itself, as one empire, the old glories of *Assyria*,—the Assyria of Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar,—and which thus involves in its associations and connexions the whole body of the *eastern* enemies of the Jewish people. And then, adds St Mark, she was "a Greek;" she inherited (from the Greek colonists or traders of her country, doubtless) and she symbolized, when she fell at the feet of Christ, the image-worship of the *west*, and, bound as *that* was with all its habits and manners, might sufficiently represent the entire mass of its degrading sensualities and its profitless wisdom.

Now let us turn from the suppliant to her divine Acceptor. Christ was, at the moment she met Him, purposely a wanderer from the land of Israel, displeased, we may conclude, with the result of an interview He had just held with

the chiefs of the unhappy people His favor was so soon to abandon. And what was the nature, what the subject of that interview? What, in the practical Judaism of the age of Christ, would you pronounce to have been most unworthy of a perpetual religion, most requiring the substitution of a system more comprehensive, most amenable to the divine judgments? You would reply, its bigoted attachment to spiritless ceremony, its multiplication and enforcement of unauthorized traditions, its complicated hypocrisy, and perhaps, above all, if you were to select an instance, that eminently atrocious device of hypocrisy, by which its teachers instructed their pupils to desert a parent under pretext of honoring God. Such precisely are the subjects upon which Christ has just met and refuted these miserable guides. "Scribes and Pharisees which were of *Jerusalem*," thus representing, though in Galilee, the very heart of the corrupted people. Just such are the guilty perversions upon which he has cited a prophecy of Isaiah (xxix. 17), which in the original is followed by an express annunciation of some most mysterious change, a "marvellous work and wonder among the people," at which "the wisdom of the wise is to perish, and the understanding of the prudent to be hid," but which is to "make Lebanon" (the very country of our Syrian suppliant) "a fruitful field, while the fruitful field becomes a forest." Just such are the accursed doctrines, of which He has but now said to His disciples, telling Him on His way of the offended Pharisees, that "every plant that His Father had not planted should be *rooted up*," and that the blind and their followers "should both *fall into the pit*." Just such is the loathsome, the corrupted, the decaying Judaism from which the Lord of Glory, grieved yet resolute, turns to meet the woman of Canaan, the worshipping heathen; to meet the mystical Church of the Gentiles, as she comes up from the wilderness, with the stamp and credentials upon her of all nations, and people, and tongues; as she comes to find Him

out in His loneliness, though (how appropriate is the parallel!) "He would have no man know it." Blessed Redeemer!—the thoughtful guides of the Church of old assigned to Thee "a double will." I had rather bow to the mystery than discuss it; but *here* at least we may discern in Thee a will beyond that purpose of concealment! Well do we know that thy kind heart was already yearning for the humble believer before she came to Thee; that by Thee was given the faith that brought her; that "Thou couldst not be hid," because Thou gavest her a heart to see and follow Thee through thousands! The hour *was* at length come, that Jeremiah saw through his tears of old, when "the Gentiles should come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and should say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit!" —Jer. xvi. 19.

Now for a brief summary of the interview. It is the second Adam, and the Church the second Eve! Humble, repentant, and believing, she comes from the long slavery of her idols. She speaks for one she hath left at home among the tombs, harassed and torn by the tyranny of Satan. Her words are few; she strives not to be "heard for her much speaking," but quantity is compensated by intensity of feeling, and truth of conviction. Tears and cries, not words and periods, for Him who hears not with human ears; who regards not the tongue, but listens to the beating of the heart. Her words are few, but what a body of theology is here! She "cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." "Mercy," for every thought and purpose of thine is compassion; "mercy," for art not thou the long-expected Messiah, at once the Lord of all and the Son of David, true God and true Israelite? "Mercy on *me*," for mercy to her wretched offspring is one with mercy to the Church; for "the daughter of my people" groans and weeps beneath the crushing

bondage of the Evil one. "She besought Him," says St Mark, "that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter." She acknowledged that the true solution of the physical and moral curse of this world was the supremacy of him whom the Son of David, and He alone, was empowered to overthrow. And how much more can we add to her creed?

But the reception is as remarkable as the appeal. "He answered her not a word." A course so unlike His ordinary one, so unlike that prodigality of mercy when crowds were healed as they came, marks the absolute peculiarity of the occasion, and points to a wider purpose, and a more expansive interpretation. The religion of Christ had at first "no word" for the Gentile; and its subsequent extension was only an instance of that triumphant wisdom of heaven which (strange to say) wrought the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and enlightened the world by Jewish blindness. To deepen and enforce the contrast, He *instantly* answers the interposing disciples, and answers only to fortify exclusion: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Here, then, is the trial of a faith, which is to believe His character in spite of His words, and to know Him merciful even when His mercy is shrouded. Did she falter? We know not what momentary misgiving may have crossed her spirit as she heard the solemn words: "I cannot, must not pity thee, though I would!" But courage, poor suppliant! There is hope in the very nature of the limitation. Remember the agonies of the sufferer, the Satan-doomed, whom you have left behind you dependent on the success of the appeal you make! Remember that on the strength of your faith she hangs more truly, than ever gasping disease depended on the energies of medicine; that in your firmness her health returns, with your despair her case is indeed desperate. But the woman of Canaan, the outcast of haughty Israel, requires no reminding.—"She came,"—undaunted,

unrepelled, she came,—“and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me !”

You will observe that the pressure of the trial, in this great example, lies peculiarly in this, that it augments as it advances, and only ceases when it has reached its acmé. When the thunder-cloud has swelled and darkened to the *utmost*, it bursts in a shower of blessings. The objections of the Lord are twofold; one taken from the limits of His commission, and one from the degradation of the object, manifestly the bitterer and sterner rebuke. And I need not remind you how perfectly the *wider* parallel corresponds; how answerably the body of the Gentiles, the oppressed of Satan, were excluded from divine favor, partly by the mysterious limitations of Providence, and partly by the enormity of their own pollutions. On this I cannot now insist at length; our time allows little more than to survey the rejoinders of the Canaanite, and in her of the weeping and long-deserted Church of the heathen; to note their simple brevity; and yet their exquisite pertinence. It is plain that there were two ways to meet the two objections respectively. One was to appeal to the merciful power, and the other to the merciful equity of the Messiah. The Spirit of God instructed our poor Canaanite in both.

“I am not sent but to Israel,” said Jesus. “She came,” not with an argument, but a prayer that involved an argument, “and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me !” She no longer calls Him Son of David, for her object was to rise from the Son of *David* to the Son of God, from the Messiah of the Jew to the Messiah of the world,—to “the *Lord*” in the simple majesty of the name, yea, to “the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace.” She, therefore, designates Him by the vaster and ampler title, and adds to her designation “worship.” She insinuated that “the Lord” had power *above His commission*; that this plenipotentiary of heaven could at will transcend the terms of His instructions; and by that omnipotence which

ruled the world it had created, she invoked Him, "Lord help me!" But even this is ineffective. Faith must see more than power; and the Canaanite must pay a price for being the model of the Church to come. Like Him she implored, she must be "made perfect through sufferings." For,—alas!—omnipotence acts by mysterious and often exclusive law; though the agent be almighty, the object may be unfit for its operation; the same power that bade Carmel blossom left Sinai a desert. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to *dogs*;" "Let the children (St Mark adds) first be filled!" But now for a bolder flight of the eagle-wing, and a keener glance of the eagle-eye of faith. She springs from the supreme control to the benevolent equity of Providence. She rises above the clouds of the divine power, often, to us who can only see them from below, dark, disturbed, and stormy, into the holy serenity beyond them. She sees the calm Sovereign of the universe, partial, yet impartial too, preferring some, yet forgetting none. She knows that "His care is over *all* His works," and,—deepest wonder of her heaven-sent enlightenment!—she can see that He loves her, and yet accord His unquestionable right to love, if He please it, others more; allows she can ask but little, yet believingly dares to pronounce that little certain! She will permit (would to God we could always follow her in our speculations!) no mystery of dispensation to contradict the truth of the divine character. "Truth, Lord," is her retort, for the calmness of her settled convictions left her power to *point* her reply: "Truth, Lord! yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Everything is here. All Christianity is concentrated in one happy sentence. She believes in her own lowliness; she believes in God's absolute supremacy; she believes in the secret propriety of the apparent inequalities of His providence; she believes that those inequalities can never affect the true universality of His love. God is all, yet she is something too, for she is God's crea-

ture. Men from deep places can see the stars at noon-day; and from the utter depths of her self-abasement she catches the whole blessed mystery of heaven: like St Paul's Christian, "in having nothing, she possesses all things." No humility is perfect and proportioned, but that which makes us hate ourselves as corrupt, but respect ourselves as immortal; the humility that kneels in the dust, but gazes on the skies! Oh! with what joy did the blessed Teacher see himself foiled in that high argument!—how gladly did He yield the victory to that invincible faith!—how did He joy to see the grace thus budding which He himself had planted. He who gave Jacob the strength to wrestle with Him of old, gave the Gentile mother the power to vanquish Him now! "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt!...For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter!"—Matt. xv. 28; Mark vii. 29. Yes, the devil has departed from that emancipated frame. "Her daughter was made whole from that very hour." The color is returned to those pallid cheeks, the blood no longer streams from those lacerated limbs. The sepulchre and the desert are no more the haunts of the rescued maniac; the mother's love is triumphant through faith. Satan is dethroned from brain and heart, the faculties are free for God. And say, shall not we assume a louder strain, and swell the burden of the song till heaven shall ring, while *we*,—the saved from Satan, the mystic antitype of that lone victim,—echo, across the chasm of ages, the praises of the merey, that crushed for ever the earthly omnipotence of Satan, that hurled the fiend, "like lightning," from the heaven of his power, and raised on the ruins of sin and sin's slavish law the everlasting monarchy of grace!" "O woman, great is thy faith!" O Church of the living God, great was thy endurance in the days of old: "We have heard, and our fathers have declared unto us the noble things of their day, and of the old time before them!" High and holy is the inheritance, thy faith, through fire

and blood, hath transmitted! And oh!—people of the living God!—Gentiles “grafted into the olive tree” of Christ!—heathens who are blest, while “the children of the kingdom are cast out,” whom grace, itself unbought, hath bought from hell, buried in baptism and therein risen again!—shall any wile of the seducer delude you back to the ruin from which you have been saved? Shall this august heritage of glory have been offered and bestowed in vain?—that heritage of mercy, no smaller though thousands share it! “The devil is gone out” of the Gentile daughter, but shall he return with the seven darker spirits, and the last end be worse than the first? God grant you light to see, and strength to avoid this fearful doom; and, knowing that graces abused are far worse than graces never given, may He by faith and godly fear enable you to reach that holy country, where the Canaanite mother has ere now, it may be, learned to glory in a celestial Canaan, and the demoniac daughter, whom Jesus freed on earth, has found a voice to speak her gratitude in heaven!

SERMON XII.

THE FAITH OF MAN AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

Faithful is he that calleth you.—1 THESSALONIANS V. 24.

THE highest object of man's existence is undoubtedly to hold communion with his God. For this his nature was originally framed, and in this alone will his nature ever find contentment or repose. God is, as it were, the counterpart to his being; the divine and human elements are fitted to each other; and humanity, without the corresponding principle of Deity, is a thing imperfect, insufficient, incomplete. This it is that makes human life such an enigma; this it is that has perplexed the speculative, and maddened the misanthropic, and clouded the calculations of even the amiable among mankind. The vital tie that connected us with heaven is broken. We are as a limb of the body separated (by paralysis or any other internal cause) from the benefits of the general circulation. God is, so to speak, the great centre of life and motion, the *heart* of the universal frame. We have insulated ourselves from God; we have *deadened the nerve* that conducted his influences, and what remains but a mass, with perhaps the outward appearance of life, some wild convulsive struggles that look like life, but in reality, and for all purposes of regulated strength, or useful effort, or graceful motion, a cold, unprofitable, unanimated mass! And this is just the condition of man so long as he continues exiled from the communion of his God; all the appearances of

power and vitality, none of the truth; faculties prepared for action, but no energy to set them in play; like that Church of the Apocalypse to which the Spirit writes, "He hath a name that he liveth, and is dead!"

Were man wholly and hopelessly, and from the beginning, this lost, debased thing, such expressions as I have used would indeed be preposterous. No one, I suppose, ever lamented that *the brute creation* was shut out from the converse of angels. Now why should this be so? What is it which would convict of gross extravagance the man who should waste his days in lamenting, that the beasts of the field were condemned to perpetual exclusion from the glories of that angelic community which encompasses the throne of God? Plainly, because there are no organs, or faculties, or attributes of any kind in the brute that *point* to a brighter destiny. There are no traces of a fall from original brightness; there is nothing about him which makes it a practical contradiction that he should be *as* he is, and yet be *what* he is; nothing which evermore cries out that, though corruption be around and within him, there is a voice also which condemns the corruption, and desires that seek for better satisfactions than this miserable world can ever bestow! The *true*, clear, unequivocal perception of his own destitution, and of the necessity of a reunion with the source of all excellence, is indeed the exclusive gift of the enlightening Spirit of God; but even in the natural man there are faint, occasional gleams of a *something* over and above his present state, even though he knows not what it is. There is, at all events, in his own perpetual *unhappiness*, a tacit, but pressing and perpetual proof, that, whatever be the nature of the state for which he was originally intended, this world, most assuredly, from its incapability of answering the call of his whole being for happiness, can never have been that state. It is most true that the man may never once have *declared*, in so many words, that he feels himself not in his native element; but

what avails that; His sorrows, his tears, his whole nature, are everlastingly proclaiming it. This is a confession, not made with lips, but written in blood, and registered in all the woes of all mankind. Every domestic bereavement, every public calamity, every groan for himself or for others, that ever was uttered by man, all alike are a confession (more mighty than language can devise) that man was never ultimately designed by the great Creator of all for a scene like this; that, by some cause or other, he has been excluded from his own appropriate sphere; that, made for God, he has deserted his Maker, and for a time, in terrible retribution, has been deserted by Him!

I say, then, that everything in nature, but, above all, our own melancholy conviction, attests the reality and the consequences of our separation from God; and the reason why I have dwelt upon the point is this,—that without some notion of the extent of the loss, you can never arrive at an estimate of the value or the nature of the *restoration*. It is by the length of the dark shadow you are to compute the height of the elevation beyond it. It is by summing up in your own minds the long catalogue of woe, which, even within our own ordinary experience, sin has introduced, that you will be enabled to conceive (as far as man can yet conceive) the enormous importance of that manifestation of mercy, whose object is, by the descent of God Himself among mankind, to bind once more the broken links of communion between man and God! Yes, if there be among us,—and what assembly of human beings is without such auditors?—if there be here *one* soul that has ever mourned in solitude over hopes deceived and prospects dimmed, and a life at times without motive or consolation, to that person I would say, “You are *yourself* among the most powerful proofs of the deep truth of Christ’s eternal Gospel!” It was not to a world perfect in all its elements, that He came upon His mission of salvation. It is the perpetual mark of all false systems, that they begin by

flattering men and end by debasing them. Christ alone began by teaching (what you now feel) the bitter lesson of man's degradation, feebleness, and uncertainty, in order that, upon the deep foundation of human depravity, he might build the immortal structure of human sanctification. The gospel of *faith* is not the gospel of a consummate paradise, but of a weak, and shivering, and wretched world. All *your* sorrows were present to Christ Jesus when He framed His own glorious remedy; and it is to such as you that he speaks, when, early in His blessed work, He proclaims, that through Him the mourners shall be comforted, and "the weary and heavy-laden" receive "rest."

Now *what* is the nature of the restoration provided for man, whom we have thus seen in all the shame and misery of a banishment from God? We have dwelt upon the wretched characteristics of his unredeemed condition. We have dwelt upon the evident tokens in his nature, of powers formed for a mightier grasp and a vaster theatre. We have seen him, along with the rest of "the whole creation," "groaning and travailing;" unable to content himself with darkness, at the very time that he is "loving darkness rather than light." If you believe that I have over-stated one item in the list of human debasement, I am content with the remainder. But well do I know that there is scarce one among us (would we all but make the examination) whose recollection cannot summon as sad an assortment of weaknesses permitted yet condemned; of follies unavailingly regretted; of promises to God (for I speak to baptized Christians), repeated, and reiterated, and broken; of purposes of amendment deliberately rejected or carelessly forgotten,—I say there are few indeed among us, who have made *any* attempt to realize the spiritual life, and whose memory is not charged with as sad a catalogue of self-abasement as any I could devise! Recall it, then! Recall the *cause*,—separation from God! and ask your-

selves, *what* must be the nature of the remedy provided for man?

The answer is simple: the remedy (whatever its specific nature may be) must, in some form, be a *restoration of the communion of man with God*. And this is the most general character of the Christian religion,—the simplest definition of its nature and object. Man is separated from God as a criminal; the communion is restored, by free pardon on God's part, and the acceptance of that pardon upon man's. Man is separated from God, as unholy; the communion is restored by accepting the sacrifice of Christ instead of the absolute sinlessness of Man, and by that perpetual and progressive process of sanctification, which makes a lost and ruined soul at length "meet for the inheritance of the saints." Christ, the great conduit of mercy between God and man, arrayed in all the attributes of the two natures He came to reconcile, in His own single person effects the whole; justifying, as we are in Christ, sanctifying, as Christ is in us. And *thus* it is that Christianity restores the race of man, by restoring the communion with God. Thus it is that all those perplexities of which I spoke are solved,—that humanity once more meets its counterpart in Deity,—and the harmony of the universe becomes complete!

Now, of this *union with God*, which is the great problem of the world, and which, as we have seen, Christianity alone seriously ventures to attempt, if you were called upon to state the *first great characteristic*,—reflect,—what answer would you make? Would you reply that "peace" attends it? True,—and yet peace only "attends" it. It is a consequence rather than an element. Shall we say "joy"? The same objection will lie; joy is *less* a part of the union itself than a bright and heavenly light which perpetually falls upon it. "Gratitude"? *This* does indeed mingle deeply in the intercourse with God; yet the intercourse itself must be first effected. Suppose then we call it "love"? What tongue can duly celebrate that consum-

mate grace? And yet *love* is rather the *highest* point of the communion with God, than its first and necessary step. Where, then, shall we discover that first step, and by what name shall we designate it, which brings the renovated soul into the spiritual presence of God; that state which contains within itself the essence of the connection, and of which all other religious affections are, in some measure, the consequences only? If the sacred writers have ever spoken of such a state, by what single term have they been accustomed to denote it? To discover this, consider what must be *the nature of* such a state,—of the state which first actually establishes the soul's conscious connection with its God? It must concern the intellect, and it must concern the heart, for the soul is both. In the former view it must behold and recognize God in all the fulness of His attributes,—holiness, justice, and mercy; in the latter it must love the holiness, dread the justice, desire the mercy. Rightly to BELIEVE in Christ is to know and to feel all three. Before this state of the soul arrives, the communion with God cannot be said to be to our own experience actually established; and after it, the communion is (for this world) complete. This state, then, contains in it the vital spirit of Christianity as a practical thing; it is on our part the grand passage from a world of wickedness into the conscious presence of Christ; it is the internal change on which eternity is suspended. Whatever be the details of the process, the process itself (if really the genuine work of the Holy Spirit) must, from the very nature of the case, comprise in it the seeds of immortal glory. I need not repeat to you, that this complex act of knowledge and affection is, in the Scriptures, denominated the act or grace of FAITH.

You will now perceive why it is that in this manner I have approached the great truth proposed in the text. That truth is the ground and warrant of the *intimate communion*, which, I have already declared to you, it is the

great object of Christianity to establish. Christianity is a "ministry of reconciliation," the restoration of a broken bond. Now in every perfect union there must be mutual confidence, and a strict fulfilment of engagements on both sides. If man be trustful, God must be "faithful." In this great contract there must be in God a *something* that will answer to the faith that is in his humble follower. And in affirmation of this,—to show that there is indeed a perfection in the Deity, correspondent to the grace He gives, to make the union complete, to leave nothing imperfect,—the Apostle, at the very time that he declares that man is "justified by faith," also reiterates (as if to show that God also, in another sense, shall one day be "justified" by His preservation of faith to man) that "the Lord is faithful," that "God is faithful," or, as in the text, that "faithful is He that calleth you." Thus faith in man and faithfulness in God are the two members of one spiritual harmony. Neither is to be conceived without the other. Man, without God, would be fatherless; and God has almost permitted us to say that, without His people (the "little children" whom He wills not "to perish"), He would himself be, as it were, *childless* in His own celestial family!

Having, then, seen how the faith of the believer and the faithfulness of God work out that blessed communion, which Christ came upon earth to establish, let us for a moment dwell upon *that* element of the two, which in the text is brought more directly before us,—even the faithfulness of that "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

The instance of God's inflexible fidelity, which the Apostle notes in the text, is gloriously characteristic of the spiritual system to which we belong. What I mean may be illustrated in this way. No words can go beyond the confidence of *David* in the faithfulness of God. "Thy faithfulness reacheth to the clouds." "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord! thy faithfulness also in the

congregation of the saints." "Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens." "His truth endureth to all generations." To all these expressions (and hundreds of *such* expressions), no doubt, high and spiritual meanings belong. Yet, even so understood, they refer, more usually, to the mighty works which God was to perform, in exalting His divine supremacy over the kingdoms of the earth. The outward and visible glories of God's holy monarchy appear to have been those which stood most prominently in the royal Prophet's vision. *Holiness* was indeed to be the foundation of all; but yet a holiness triumphant in visible majesty and regal pomp. But what is that faithfulness of God to which St Paul invites attention? The kingdom of God was to him evidently an inward and spiritual kingdom, even at the time that he looked forward to "the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints." How profound are the words with which he introduces his declaration of the truthfulness of God! "The very God of peace *sanctify* you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved *blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it!" It was no relief from temporal evils that the Apostle promised, no security from adversity, that was to manifest the omnipotence of God exerted on behalf of his people. No: the mercy of God might send them to the stake or the lions; it was still His mercy, if it but "kept them unspotted from the world." It might expose them to insult, calumny, and wrong; they received it still as mercy, if it "established them in every good word and work." Oh, brethren! how many of *you* are content with *such* faithfulness as this on the part of your heavenly Father? Is this, indeed, the tone and tenor of your prayers? When, in the solitude of your closets, you address yourselves to the great work of supplication, is your heart,—(I ask not what the lips are uttering),—is

your *heart* busy in pleading with God His own eternal faithfulness in behalf of your sanctification and spiritual safety? Is it for a more resolute faith, and a higher reach in holiness, that you remind Him of His pledge to hear you? Or are not your affections too often still crouching among the hopes and fears of this world, even at the very moments assigned to solitude and prayer? Nay, at this hour, when within the sacred precincts of His own temples, the brotherhood of the Christian family meet to hold communion with their common Father, are no such miserable visions presented to Him instead of prayer? And *such* supplicants speak of the "faithfulness of God!" Yes, God *is* faithful even to such! "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear!" This is the promise to such as insult, with a mockery of devotion, the long-suffering of God; and to such promises God *can* be awfully "faithful!"

The faithfulness of God is represented by the Apostle, in the context, as extending to the whole man, to "body," to "soul," and to "spirit," which are all said to be "preserved blameless." The entire of our feeble humanity is sheltered under this canopy of divine protection. The "body" is subdued into its place as humble minister to the soul; the "soul" is guarded from its own special corruptions; and the "spirit,"—the element that, given from heaven, is still nearest to heaven,—is preserved undecayed amid a hostile world. Here is a defence for this triple nature of man. And, of a surety, the mystic Trinity that occupies the throne of heaven will *not* forget this humble image of their ineffable mystery (for so the divines of old time were wont to regard it), which the Apostle has thus assigned to our inferior being! Surely the "soul" will be preserved by that creative Deity, who first infused it into the frame; the "body," by that eternal Son who was pleased to assume it; and the "spirit," by that ever-blessed Spirit

who Himself bestows it, and well may guard His own inestimable gift!

It is also said of this faithfulness, that it is the faithfulness of Him "that calleth you." This is not the least wondrous circumstance in the unalterable faithfulness of God, that it is a fidelity to *His own* gracious engagement. He calls, and He is faithful to His own merciful calling; He summons the heart to Himself, and He adheres to His own voluntary summons; He, without destroying human freedom or human responsibility, of His free grace, commences, continues, and ends the whole Christian work. Yet, so "faithful" is this His profound compassion, that He represents Himself as bound and tied to the impulses of His own unconstrained mercy. There is no bond but His own love, yet that bond is stronger than iron; and He, whom the universe cannot compel, commands Himself!

With such a God, such promises, such faithfulness, such calls, must the question be evermore asked from Christian pulpits, *Why* is there a *delay* in seeking to appropriate "so great salvation"? If we believe that these things are true, that the baptismal vow is no mockery, and the Scriptures no delusion, where is the earnest, active faith, and where the life, that answer to it? Why are our prayers so often a superstitious form, our communion with God a name, our Christian profession forgotten or disgraced? Shall it, indeed, be, that God has bowed the heavens to make offers of mercy, that every soul is invited to partake of His inexhaustible favor, that the message of His "faithfulness" is perpetually proclaimed and universally known; and yet, that year after year passes away, and, except for a few happy and devoted children of light, scattered among the tribes of mankind, the world is, in effect, still in darkness, and the message of an infinite love known indeed, but only known that the knowledge may bring with it the additional guilt of deliberate rejection!

I began with appealing to our common experience; let

me return to it before I close. I would ask you to what the whole efforts of human life are directed? What is that which all pursue,—the same, though sought in a thousand paths? Is it not a something fixed and stable, something on which hope can rest, and towards which the eye of the soul can turn, as to an object of settled security? It is not for me to conjecture the special desire, pursuit, solicitude, of each I address. The countenances of men are not more diversified than their hearts; in both instances there is, out of a few elements, a variety almost infinite. But this at least can, assuredly, be said of all,—that hope is perpetually pointing to *some* future object, real or shadowy, and that no agony could surpass his, whose life was wholly without motive, or expectation, or aim. Now, is there one among us who can guarantee his lot from bitter disappointment? Is there one here who does not know that, whatever be his special pursuit, let it be once attained, and half its value vanishes? Is there one among us who does not know, that the attainment itself is miserably precarious, and that, in most of the prizes of this world, the momentary pleasure of the winner is counterbalanced by the prolonged disappointment of hundreds? And can you feel contentment while involved in so wretched a scene as this? I ask, are we to have no ambition to escape this wearisome round of labors that bring no profit, of pleasures that have no continuance, of enmities without cause, and friendships without permanence? Desiring something fixed above the reach of change, can we really expect to find it in a world where the principle of change is the only thing unchangeable, and over which the gloomy shadow of death evermore impends, disturbing every calculation, and clouding every prospect of the future? These are simple questions, they are addressed to your daily experience; the youngest person here is old enough to answer them, the oldest can give them *but one* answer!

Now observe, the prominent character of God, put for-

ward in the text before us, is *unshaken stability*. "Faithful is He that calleth you." In opposition to all the uncertainties of this world, He purposely sets Himself forth as the single object beyond and above change. "I am the Lord; I change not."—Mal. iii. 6. Having given to man a desire for some object, in which all his powers might repose, He has made Himself alone that object. God is the *true* object, but we seek our God everywhere but where He is to be found. We seek the God, who is to satisfy our hearts, in riches, in pleasure, in power; we find Him only "in the face of Jesus Christ." *There* He discloses His own unchangeable glory, as the one adorable object in which man is ultimately made to rest. *There* is the sufficiency for every affection, the satisfier of every want, and in this sense, as in every other, "the desire of all nations." Brethren, if you have not made trial of *this* great source of relief, I put it to you, have you treated your own case fairly? If, in the midst of your perplexities and disappointments, you hear constant mention of an infallible remedy, are you doing yourself justice when you neglect to adopt it? How, oh! how is it, that the prudence, which would so certainly direct us in the management of bodily health, utterly fails, when the spiritual life or death of the eternal soul is the tremendous question at issue?

But remember, however you may waver, or hesitate, or procrastinate, "God is faithful," faithful to His warnings as He is to His promises! A few years more (to many here far fewer years than they have already passed), and the crisis shall at last arrive, which shall determine, by terrible proofs, the awful faithfulness of God. A day shall come when every wavering half believer shall learn, how truly it was "the god of this world" that "blinded" him in that half belief! At that hour, that inflexible faithfulness, which forms the rock of his salvation to the redeemed one's heart, shall assume, to the God-despiser, the terrible form of an inflexible curse. The permanence of God's character is the very

warrant of his doom, and the seal of its eternity. It is a profound and impressive remark of Bishop Butler that the most formidable of all God's attributes to the wicked is His goodness; "malice," observes the sage, "may be wearied or satiated; caprice may change; but goodness is a steady, inflexible principle of action." The very same attributes which (like the pillar in the wilderness) present to the saved, a side of light and protection, shall present (themselves unchanged) to the lost, a gloomy apparition of clouds and darkness. The justice that acquits the believer, in the blood of the sacrifice, shall condemn the despiser of that blood. The goodness that shelters the beloved children in the bowers of Paradise, shall (to us mysteriously but truly) abandon to his punishment the guilty, for the benefit of the universe. The wisdom that is shown in contriving salvation shall be "justified of her children" in condemnation also. The power that framed a heaven for the blessed shall be revealed more awfully still in the structure of the abodes of misery! Oh, brethren! what is to be gained by a contest with such a being as this? Can you expect to sway His eternal purpose, or bend to your caprices His eternal laws? Think you that he will waver because we hesitate; that He will forget His faithfulness because we forget our faith! Never, never! *You must alter, for God will not.* We beseech you, then, "be ye reconciled!" The ransom has long been paid, heaven is open, and Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Everything is ready but the heart of man! Do you in anywise feel, under the impulses of God's grace, that it were high time this matter were settled between you and your Judge? Pause not one hour in setting cordially about it! Those who love God will be your examples and instructors. Be with them in prayer and watching. Seek for the light where God has bade you expect it; seek it with an earnest, humble, persevering heart; and God Himself will raise up in your minds the lamp of His own immortal truth. With His own Spirit He will teach you,

and with His own love surround you, and with His own power protect you, and with His own joy refresh you. The whole host of heaven will be your spectators and applauders. You may have to bear the coldness of earthly friends (for such things must sometimes be), but you will do it only to enter into a holier intimacy with “the generally assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.” You may perhaps have to resign some of the distinctions of earth, but the everlasting home prepared for you in heaven will more than compensate the paltry loss. You will give up “this world,” but you will receive in return the God of the universe! “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.”

SERMON XIII.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

(Preached on the Second Sunday after Trinity.)

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment :

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few are chosen.—MATT. xxii. 11-14.

THESE verses, though taken from a different Evangelist, form the second part,—the closing scene and consummation of the impressive parable of the festival and guests, which you heard read as the Gospel of this day. They have always seemed to me to derive a peculiar awfulness from the connexion in which they occur. I do not merely mean that that connexion puts the tremendous *import* of these verses beyond doubt, that is too obvious to require much confirmation; but that the connexion with the earlier part of the parable gives the prediction now before us,—the prediction of eternal judgment,—all the terrible simplicity of a plain matter of *historical* fact. For this parable,—the series of events symbolized in the parable,—stretches across all time, from the first call of the Jews to the final judgment of mankind. Part is past, part is to come; *we* are in the midst. The part that is past,—the repeated invitations, the perverse refusals, the fearful punishment of

the Jewish people, is certain, for it is fulfilled; certain, not in the expectation of faith, but in the ordinary belief of historical record; certain, exactly as we are certain of any unquestionable event of times gone by, of the leading circumstances of any national history whatever,—of the fall of the Roman Empire, or the reign of Charlemagne, or the Norman Conquest, or the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Nothing is of such felt reality as what we know to be past. It has made sure of existence. No power can ever make that to be in itself doubtful, or barely possible, which has already occurred. Not Omnipotence itself could now make that not have been which *has* been. But part of the parable,—that which we are about to be engaged on,—is yet to come; and what I desire to impress is this, that the *felt reality* which belongs to the one communicates itself, with a most awful power, to the other; that it makes the future event as much a matter of downright historical certainty as the past event. They are both equally included in the one simple sketch, and when that sketch was drawn, both were alike future. The great event of the divine vengeance on the Jews, in the seventh verse, was just as much a thing *to come*, as the universal judgment in the verses before us, at the time the Lord spoke the parable that proclaims both. *Both* were then to come; both were predicted in the self-same prophecy; *one* has notoriously taken place; who can doubt that the other is certain? He who was so fearfully right when He predicted the one, was surely not mistaken in predicting the other. The one was the judgment of the Church Jewish; the other the strictly analogous judgment of the Church universal. Events have made the one a fact, and we look back upon it as such; events as surely will make the other a fact too; and the time will as surely come, when, from a point in the eternal ages yet to be, men will look back upon what we now call the Last Day, and see in it, too, the *first* day of a further

and mightier dispensation, the dawn of a new *celestial* development of the one everlasting kingdom of God.

This awful certainty of the judgment prophecy, arising out of its being but one of a chain of predicted events, of which some are now undoubtedly certain, because already past, seems to me so very important, as a matter of practical impression, that I may be pardoned attempting a further illustration of it. Take for this purpose some succession of events familiar to us all, the more familiar the better. Let us suppose that, at the time when Britain was peopled by half-savage tribes, before the period of the Roman sway, some gifted seer among the Druid's had engraven upon a rock a minute prediction of a portion of the future history of the island. Suppose he had declared, that it should ere long be conquered by a warrior people from the south; that he should name the Cæsar himself, describe his eagle standard, and all the circumstances of the conquest. Suppose he should portray the Saxon invasion centuries after,—the sevenfold division of the monarchy, the Danish inroad, the arrival and victory of the Normans. Our imagined prophet pauses here, or at whatever other precise period you please to suppose; and his next prediction, overleaping a vast undescribed interval, suddenly represents the England of the present day. Now conceive the forefathers of existing England to have studied this wondrous record, and to find to their amazement that every one of its predictions was accurately verified; that as their generations succeeded, they but walked in the traces assigned for them by the prophetic inscription, and all it spoke progressively became fact. Can we suppose that, however far away in futurity was the one remaining event, and however impossible to *them*, at their early stage, to conceive the means by which all the present wonders of this mighty empire could ever be realized, they would permit themselves to doubt its absolute certainty, after such overwhelming proofs of the supernatural powers of the seer

who guaranteed it? Would they not shape their course as confidently in view of the unquestionable future, as in reference to the unquestionable past? In short, would not that future be already considered, in a manner, historical,—already a fixed, integral portion of the story of the nation? It is just thus we call on you to regard the great prophet's announcement of the judgment to come. That too is predicted, but as one event among many,—among many that are now undeniably certain, for they are now actually past. An event, future, when the Lord spoke, is now an old historical epoch; and that very event is here bound up with the revelation of the judgment. I ask you, does not this connexion give a terrible *reality* to our expectation of that judgment? That the sun shall rise to-morrow is not as certain as the judgment to come; for that sunrise, sure as it may be, can hardly be called as sure as what we know to be past; and the past is not more certain than the judgment, since the same unerring voice, long before either, has declared them both. Awful surely is it, thus to feel ourselves surrounded on all sides with these authentic testimonies of the great consummation to come; these plain, undeniable proofs that we are moving onward, and events on all sides converging to a point already fixed in the counsels of the Most High. Doubt that the knowledge was supernatural, and the utterance, too, when in a time of profound peace, and sitting with His few poor followers, He calmly declared that superb Jerusalem should, within that generation, be a ruin, and these poor followers go forth to revolutionize the earth;—*then* may you doubt that same voice when it spake, in that self-same hour, of the judgment, not of Jerusalem, but of the world, and the establishment of a Church no longer militant, but triumphant and in glory!

It is this great coming event, then, of which,—itself unseen,—the awful *shadow* has, in the fate of Jerusalem, already fallen across the history of the world, that the Lord here describes. This marriage feast, of which the

parable speaks, is to take place in the courts of heaven; it is the future everlasting espousal of Christ to His Church, at last by Himself to Himself presented, "not having spot or wrinkle," "holy and without blemish;" the same majestic ceremonial which is elsewhere, by the very same prophetic figure entitled "the marriage supper of the Lamb," when "His bride shall have made herself ready;" that eternal union of Christ and the blessed, of which St Paul instructs us that all earthly marriages are types,—of which above all, that first marriage in Eden was a type; for from the body of this second Adam also is His Eve,—"the mother of all" that be spiritually "living,"—formed. The scene, then, is in heaven; but it is preceded by a long and momentous process upon earth; it is a festival with guests; these guests must be invited ere they can present themselves to be received. And now is the time, and this world the scene, of the invitation. Of this invitation, therefore, we must first speak, and then of the qualification,—the appropriate "wedding garment,"—of the guests; and lastly, of the awful consummation in the text,—the lack of the qualification of this spiritual apparel of the soul, and its consequence.

I. To us, then, how and when is this invitation actually addressed?

1. It is delivered to us, first of all, in our *Baptism*, when taken out of the mass of Adam, we are translated into the kingdom of Christ; when "buried by Baptism into His death," "buried with Him in Baptism," we are thence "risen with Him through faith of the operation of God who raised Him;" when solemnly, by that most holy rite, introduced into the spiritual sphere, even the outer chamber of "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," we are thenceforth (oh! most awful privilege, profession, and responsibility, our ineffable blessing or our tenfold condemnation!) enrolled as the children of God, members of the crucified and ascended Christ, expectant

inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. And thus, too, in reference to the subsequent mystery of the parable, in Baptism is the holy *garment* said to be bestowed; for "as many as have been baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ."

2. But in the delivery of that "unspeakable gift," we have most of us been unconscious recipients, blessed, and unknowing of our blessings. Therefore it is wisely provided that, with our own free and deliberate assent, we should adopt and publicly testify to the grace of God. And thus through the ministration of Christ's chief ministers among us, is the delivery and the acceptance of the invitation reiterated and established in our *Confirmation*. And *there*, as on the one hand we solemnly proclaim that the vows of our Baptism are indeed upon us,—that by the covenant of our Baptism we refuse not to stand or fall; so, on the other, may we trust that, in answer to the prayer, the gifts of the Spirit to illumine and to fortify are not withheld; and (once more in reference to the *garment* of the parable) that, as in our Baptism we have "put on Christ," so now we are enabled, as well as exhorted, to "put on the *whole armor* of God," therewith to "stand against the wiles of the devil," to "withstand in the evil day," and "having done all, to stand."

3. Again is this invitation delivered to us, and the whole imagery of this very parable vividly exhibited, when, after the ministerial proclamation of divine forgiveness to "all that with hearty repentance and true faith turn to God," we are admitted to share, in a mystery, the spiritual sustenance of the Lord's holy table. It is in the sense of this close and obvious application, that our own Church warns her communicants to "come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, *in the marriage garment* required of God in Holy Scripture." Every such occasion is indeed a shadow,—rich, no doubt, with substantial blessings, but yet in its prospective character a shadow, of the eternal festival, *combined with* the eternal judgment to come. Hence it is

that, with its character of inestimable blessedness, St Paul so awfully mingles (exactly as in our parable) the notion of an accompanying judgment:—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat;" "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation," or "judgment," "to himself." And so should each Christian make every such periodical approach to God an occasion of earnest and thoughtful self-inquiry; an anticipation of the last awful scrutiny; a prelibation of judgment; an inward realizing of that tremendous hour when sight shall behold,—in horror or in transport,—the Christ, who is now spiritually and sacramentally received by faith.

4. But not alone in those holy offices of the house of God (two of them the express provision of Christ Himself, and channels of His mysterious graces, the third an ancient and holy observance in which God's presence, if not directly covenanted, may be confidently hoped); not alone in these is the merciful invitation of our God to His high festival given and received. His own words forbid any such limitation: "All day long have I stretched out mine hands." "Wisdom uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse" (the highways of our parable), "in the opening of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words." Every urgent appeal of the ministers of Christ to their charges,—every new proclamation of "the goodness and severity of God,"—every exhortation that, sinners themselves, they yet feel constrained to make to fellow-sinners,—all alike are reiterated utterances of the one perpetual invitation of the Lord of this everlasting festival, eager to crowd His banquet with happy and rejoicing guests. The desire to return to Him is itself a proof of His willingness to receive; for it was He who gave, and therefore gave the desire. At this hour, though weak are the lips that deliver to you His message, yet it is His message still. He it is who Himself solicits you who listen, by me who speak, and prays you from His own omnipo-

tent throne to hear and to believe. He forces not your obedience; He beseeches you to obey. It is the mystery of the parable that God is suppliant to His creature. He who agonized beneath created hands, still in the perpetuated spirit of that miraculous love, as it were, protracts His own humiliation, and beseeches the beings He has made to make Him happy by making themselves blessed. He could compel, but He *will* not; for He understands His own glory. It is His highest glory to conciliate divine omnipotence with the unimpaired freedom of man, that "His people" should be "*willing* in the day of His *power*."

Through all the creation below man His will is the law of their operations. In man alone,—free, self-conscious man,—His will would risk the dishonor of disobedience, that it might enjoy the glory of voluntary subjection. Served by the powers of the inanimate universe, the King of all that wondrous array wearies of an obedience that proves but His power and His wisdom. He demands a higher and holier bond than the laws of brute nature can supply,—unconscious, mechanical ministers of His will. The orbs of heaven, "the moon and the stars which he hath ordained," revolve in obedience to a command they know not. But He would be obeyed by the nobler attractions of the heart; the willing service, in which love is the all-sufficing law that preserves the spirits of His blessed ones revolving, in changeless harmony, around the divine centre of their regenerate life.

5. And yet there is a force, an indirect and most gracious constraint, whereby He would sometimes remind the careless of His invitation. The "*chastisements*" of God speak His summons with an eloquence of their own. Earthly tribulations are His Apostles. It is in the depths of mourning hearts His call meets its surest, its profoundest echo. "Blessed are they that mourn," to whom mourning has taught the need of this higher consolation; happy the tempest that casts its wrecks upon the shores of Paradise.

The object which preachers have vainly essayed for years, one stroke of affliction may achieve. It is when, alone and comfortless, amid his crushed and shattered hopes, the victim slowly awakes to the treachery of the "god of this world," that we may trust the rebel heart will at length bethink itself of returning to its abandoned God.

Thus at all seasons, and in all forms, goes forth the incessant proclamation of a God who still waiteth to be gracious, the invitation of the ever-merciful King to the whole multitude of His subjects. In sacraments He solemnly delivers it; in exhortations He renews and unfolds it; in all the dispensations of His high providence, by pressing contrasts, He emphatically enforces its need. His offer is *universal*, for He would be absolved before heaven and earth when that offer is despised. Man's own reason shall have to acknowledge that man, if condemned, was not unwarned; that if he did not come to God, it was not that God did not come to him. Conscience, overpowered on earth, shall assume a terrible activity in the world of punishment, it shall retain a fearful energy to condemn; and in the abode of ruin itself, the miserable attestation shall be uttered, of the long-suffering of God, of neglected mercies whose remembrance shall then constitute the deepest bitterness of its despair.

II. So much for the divine invitation. Suppose it now delivered and accepted; the attire that suits the festival must yet be provided; the "wedding garment" for this heavenly banquet has still to be sought and gained. For it is quite plain, from the parable itself, that the invitation may be given, that man may really receive it, and really avail himself of the privilege it bestows, and yet be destitute of this further necessary qualification. Nor must any artificial system of theology be allowed to obscure so manifest and undeniable a truth as this.

Clear, however, as is the great lesson of the whole (the happy instrument, we may trust, of warning to thousands

who have been content to receive it in its general purport), the precise significancy of this wedding garment has been made matter of uncertainty, and even (from its connection with another and larger question) of bitter controversy. I have no intention now of conducting you into these labyrinths. One consideration I shall hazard, because it seems to me to be very commonly overlooked. The garment must, surely, from the very nature of the image, have been intended to signify something *public and visible*, in which each wearer harmonizes with all, and all with *the spirit of the peculiar scene* into which they are introduced, and to which the dress is appropriate. I would say, then, that by this remarkable symbol our Lord did not intend, merely the inward principle of faith exclusively considered, nor yet merely the mysterious imputation of righteousness, through identification with Christ (though these are, no doubt, necessary conditions and first steps to its possession); for apparel is, of all things, the most manifest and visible, and the wedding apparel is specially the apparel of joy. This festal garment of heaven, then, which each man must bring with him into the high presence of God, seems to be no other than that celestial temper which *manifests* itself by the infallible indications of a holy joy,—that spiritual sympathy with the things of the spiritual world, which exhibits itself in cordial, irrepressible demonstrations of the blessedness within; holy happiness, public and expressed; the “joy in the Holy Ghost”—no longer a secret, timid, half-uttered delight, but sparkling in the eye, and fearless in the voice; the “life” no longer “*hid* with Christ in God,” but “apparent with Him in glory.” I repeat it, inward spiritual happiness, developed by the presence of God, and the consciousness of heaven, into visible *manifestation*,—this is the “wedding garment” which Christ beholds and approves in the saved.

Thus viewed, this blessed possession—this glorious visible vesture of the spirit—is not merely that “putting on of

Christ" which accompanies the Christian's justification, it is rather that first blessedness seen in its ultimate consummation. The Christ, who first covers us to shield and protect, is, in the day of His power, represented as covering us to adorn and to glorify. The cloak that shelters from the tempest becomes, as it were, gradually transfigured into the garment that decorates for the bridal. "Gradually," I say, for here is the profound importance of the lesson taught us in the parable. The garment is the *gradual* attainment of a life of progressive sanctification. The guest is reproved for having entered the banquet-hall without it. He should, it seems, have sought it *before* he came. He should have brought it with him from that earthly scene which is but the antechamber of heaven; it is not, "How, *after* thou hadst reached my presence, soughtest thou not the fitting vestment for my feast?" but "How *camest thou in* hither, not having a wedding garment?"

The wedding garment, then, must be woven and fashioned on earth. It must be brought from thence with each happy spirit to heaven. And if that garment be such as I have suggested, what does this import but that on earth must be formed the temper suitable to heaven, the disposition fitted for that blessed abode; and more specifically, as here more directly intended,—the temper of a cheerful and animated sympathy with holiness,—of a high and celestial joy? A moment to each of these particulars.

That the temper suitable to a heavenly existence must be, in substance, acquired beforehand on earth; in other words, that in those who are forgiven and accepted at the last day, there will not (as perhaps men sometimes dream) be a sudden *change* of the spiritual nature to fit it for heaven, but rather a *continuance* of the previous temper of the soul on earth, with new accessions of supernatural assistance, and the abolition of all hinderances to its perfect growth; this, as it is a most indubitable scriptural truth, so is it nearly the most important of all religious truths in

its practical results. There is but *one* great change spoken of in Scripture, as taking place in the whole lifetime of the spirit of man, and that is a change on earth. Such as are our hopes and joys on earth, *such* shall they be for everlasting. It is surely unnecessary that I should insist on the *practical* bearing of this great truth, the preservation of men's inward moral nature from this world into the next. The source of much indifference in religion is the vague hope of ultimate *pardon*. But can you not now perceive that pardon itself would be worthless without an entire change of disposition; that this, therefore, is the great object to be perseveringly sought after? A few sighs and tears in the evening of life, we fondly deem, will gain our pardon; but who that has ever yet reflected, by the lights of common experience, upon the constitution of the human heart, will say that a few sighs and tears will change the nature? Plainly, then, you are omitting the chief element of this great revolution in the relations between you and God; infatuated to calculate at all upon a barely possible future, you are doubly infatuated when you leave out of your calculation the principal item in the reckoning. The pardon will open the gates of the King's palace to the guest; but those gates are equally open for his rejection, if he lack the wedding garment.

But this, the solemn, the mysterious phrase in question, recalls us from the general principle to the particular case. A heavenly vesture of the spirit must be borne with us from life to the death-bed, from the death-bed to the grave, from the grave, across the whole unknown world of spirits, to the glory; a vesture woven on earth, but even there woven of undecaying texture, and fitted for the wear of immortality. But we have seen there is something more distinct and definite here. Not *every* garment of holiness is designated in the mystic story; but the garment of a wedding, the garment of festivity, the garment then of joy.

I must not pause to remind you,—you cannot need to

be reminded,—how essential an element is *this* grace in the complex of the Christian life; how, if Scripture may be trusted, the whole spiritual life, amid all its trials and distresses, is, in some mysterious way, involved in an atmosphere of joy. I am not now about to investigate the causes, or the nature of this happy state; I must for the present assume as a mere fact that it *is* a real characteristic of the holiness of earth, and (still more undeniably) of the happiness of heaven; and I now only desire to press it as a simple *test* of your own fitness for that world to which it is eminently appropriate. I do so, because it seems to be a matter upon which no amount of self-delusion can blind us. A man may persuade himself of much that is imaginary, but he can hardly believe that he derives *joy* from a field of thought which never yields it. The feeling of joy is too distinct and characteristic for any counterfeit. And if a man can scarcely mistake indifference for joy, how yet more decisive is the test when indifference is exchanged for positive distaste and repugnance; when, so far from forming the constant spring of happiness, the topic of religion is barely endured for two or three tedious hours each seventh day; and the very mention of its grounds of hope and consolation, in the ordinary intercourse of society, seems something strange, unexpected, indecorous, intrusive; when religious themes, under the honorable exile of an affected reverence, are, in substance, banished from each social reunion, and friends can meet and pour into friendly ears every detail of sorrow or joy, but that which is to make the sorrow or joy, and can alone constitute the friendships, of an eternity. When religion is thus distasteful and thus evaded, need I say how decisive and terrible a test, in such a case, becomes the startling question,—what amount of our *happiness* truly arises from this source?—what is the ardor of our joy, the rapture of our hope, in the contemplation of heaven and of God? Our life is decorous,—yes, but is it spiritually joyful? Our

religious observances are regular,—yes, but are they the delighted utterance of gratitude and praise? We violate no plain precept among the Commandments,—grant it, alas! how unmerited liberality of concession!—but, even so, do you *rejoice* in keeping them? We exhibit the deportment of Christians, we wear the outward costume and apparel of moral propriety;—yes, but where shall we look for the brighter apparel of the soul, the brilliance and beauty of the festive robes of rejoicing saintliness, the glory of the “wedding garment?”

Such is the test I propose to you, as simple and irresistible; God grant to us all earnestness and sincerity to apply it! But this is the work of the life that now is,—of the world of time and of trial. The parable stretches beyond it. We follow the great Revealer; He withdraws the curtain, and the scenery of eternity is before us.

III. The hour is at last arrived, the burden of so many prophecies,—the hour to which all other hours are but preparatory,—the hour of the everlasting union and the everlasting separation. “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb;” yea, blessed are they which are “called,” for of the called are the “chosen.”

And now the courts of heaven are peopled with the crowding guests of God, the multitude of those to whom mercy and acceptance has been proffered, and who, hence, in whatever spirit, professed to obey the call. Manifold, no doubt, and complicated, are the feelings in all that myriad host of candidates for glory. But Scripture ever takes large and general distinctions. They have, or they have not, the temper of heaven, the heart trained to the love, and fitted for the eternal service, of God. They have, or they have not (for the single guest of the parable is, of course, but the representative of a multitude like him) the spirit of a holy sympathy with the ways and works of God, the

rejoicing anticipation that exults in the new scene of duty before it; for the happiness of heaven is the happiness of everlastingly serving God, and is intelligible only to those who love that service. They possess, or not, the hope, the joy, suitable to this mighty spousal of earth and heaven, in short, the "wedding garment" of the soul!

Of this indispensable requisite, the need (which is, as we shall see, altogether unfelt by the wretched defaulter himself) is at once visible to the penetrating glance of God. "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." "A man,"—he is represented as single, to impress more perfectly the accurate scrutiny of the divine eye, detecting the individual amid the multitude; and also in order that each of us may more distinctly appropriate to himself the individual lesson. The eternal Judge, now about to purify his long defiled Church, beholds the culprit who dares to claim glory while unattired for glory. The awful eye, rapidly traversing the ranks of the blessed, pauses darkly upon him. You remember the memorable moment when "the Lord looked upon Peter," and the Lord looks upon the guilty now again. But, oh, difference dread and unspeakable! It is the same God that gazes, yet that look was of grace, this of judgment,—that to melt, this to scorch and to consume. Uneasy, fearful misgivings glide into the heart of the wretched man; for the first time conscience is aroused, and her late awaking is terrible; for the first time he feels the hopeless distance of his own state from the purity of a world of holiness. Dim recollections return, of warnings despised in that long-vanished earthly life, now so dream-like and so distant. Words that once seemed meaningless, the cant of superstition or weakness, come back upon him fraught with terrible truth. Even before the Judge has spoken he feels his ruin sealed. And yet the words are calm and untroubled:—"Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" "Follower of mine!

how is it thou hast thought to bring the defilements of the world, the 'garment spotted with the flesh' into this home of holiness? A servant of mine,—where is the livery of thy service? A soldier of mine,—where is the uniform of thy mystical warfare? Baptismally consecrated to be a priest of spiritual sacrifices, where is the vestment of thy priesthood? Called to be a king,—a sharer of the very throne of Christ,—where are thy royal robes?" "And he was speechless."

"Speechless!" It is the terrible silence of conviction. Hardly the most thoughtless have ever read this parable, and failed to be struck with the force and significance of this part of the representation. Of all that multitude of excuses, that now pass current to justify the world's forgetfulness of its Maker, not one rises to his lips. Perhaps they have wholly vanished from his thoughts, in the unimaginable terror of that hour. Or he may remember them, but feels them too glaringly worthless to hazard now. He dares not address to the visible God those easy apologies for worldliness, on which he was willing of old to venture his salvation. He dares not avow to God in person those excuses for sin, which are themselves a worse sin than that which they are brought to justify; for the sin may be of sudden passion, but the excuse is of deliberate corruption. He dares not say,—*dare we* now to say,—we who shall yet stand beneath the same awful eye that froze his speech within him,—that, forsooth, the engagements of society, the necessities, however artificial, yet the necessities of station, the urgency of business, the more attractive urgencies of pleasure,—that these things detained him from the life to God. From one of our own hired servants should we tolerate such excuses as these for a neglected task? And is the Master of us all to endure them? "Business?" What business can compete with the security of an immortal inheritance? "Station?" What claims of social position can rival the claims of that eternal King,

who summons us to be the honored officials of His celestial administration? "Pleasure?"—but this is too futile. Alas! it is our deepest guilt that we find no pleasure in the true "ways of pleasantness," and look forward to none from Him at whose "right hand are pleasures for evermore."

But "he was speechless." He saw at last into the awful reality of things. Religion,—the phantom of this world, —substantiated in all its terrific truth, and the solid-seeming world the phantom in its stead. The ghastly reality so long evaded would be put by no longer. Conscience was to sleep no more. The vastness of the loss, the hopelessness of the doom, the infatuation of the delusion,—all burst upon him. His heart withered within, and "he was speechless." But through all the horrible silence of the time, while all heaven was mute to hear, his ear could catch the awful voice that spoke, never to be again heard, but to leave its dread echo, for all eternity, within the heart: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Into that abode of misery we cannot pursue him. It is "outer darkness," and in darkness be its horrors veiled. Not for us is it to sound those depths of despair, that flame unquenchable, that worm undying, that wall impassable, those mournings unpitied, those blasphemies unutterable, those remembrances of agony, that future without hope and without end. The faculties of man must be enlarged for even the conception of such misery as this. If there be a glory too bright for human eye to gaze on, there is an anguish too dark for human eye as yet to penetrate. Oh, brethren! if these things be indeed so, and the Lord, who shall yet judge us, hath truly thus drawn the portraiture of His own last awful sitting, at once the Court of His regal presence and the Court of His tremendous justice;—if, indeed, this high qualification of which I have spoken must be acquired, or heaven *can* never be ours,—if we

must either bring with us this robe of habitual righteousness, "walking in white" as those who are "worthy," or endure to be "clothed with curses as with a garment" for everlasting;—if this life, this little, dreamlike life, slipping so rapidly away through our hands, can never again be repeated, but all we do must *now* be done, and all we are to be for ever we now must learn to be;—if all the glory of this world, its triumphs and its distinctions, useful though they be for this temporary scene, fold up and fade as the eye darkens in death, and nothing crosses the grave with any man but the garb of the soul that he bears with him to the Court of the heavenly King;—if God gives us ample opportunity for making our calling and election sure, so that, if among the "many called" few be "chosen," no man can blame God that *he* was not among those few, and every excuse shall then be vain, and every culprit speechless;—I ask you, can any infatuation equal the infatuation of those, who, knowing all this to be certain, can yet defer this mighty work, or can be content with the feeble imposture of religion that passes current with the world for the religion of Christ? Nothing of man's mind survives the grave but that which is central and inmost in his nature; and if his religion be not there, he has left it behind him with the world, of which it was a part: it goes not with him to the judgment, and he is condemned. The religion of the world is no more a thing permanent and immortal than any other element of the world. More, surely more, than this there needs to be, or Christ has taught us the mighty lesson of this day in vain. This deep and vital union of heart and soul with the will and purposes of God,—this harmonizing of the tone and temper of our thoughts with the eternal world that awaits us,—this joyous sympathy with heaven and things heavenly which I have spoken of, as more especially the garment of the spirit that befits the marriage festival to come,—this is the abiding element over which the grave has no power, which,

disappearing from this life with the departing soul, shall re-appear with the soul itself in heaven, and receive the approving smile of God. This, and nothing short of this, is His demand in those who will be meet for His inheritance; and till this be yours, you deceive your own souls if you relax. If at this hour you feel one faint impulse to seek the blessing, cherish that impulse as His gift, welcome it as His call. He would thus arouse you to aspire after the glory He offers. He would, thus even now raise your thoughts above this world, only that He may fix them permanently upon Himself. He knows that man yearns after enduring happiness, and He would not disappoint that inborn thirst of the heart. He would direct those desires, that now go astray among the glittering phantoms of time, till they fix upon a nobler and more enduring mark,—the immutable realities of eternity. Terrible as we have seen Him in His mysterious wrath, He is more divinely abundant, more Himself, in acts of mercy. A God who “is love” would willingly cast no man “into outer darkness.” Therefore by His written word, and by the incessant voice of His ministers, doth He this day, and every day, reiterate these offers of unbounded acceptance to the “many that be called.” May the same grace that speaks in the call, by a yet deeper and more abiding operation, enable you, joyfully receiving the call, to place yourselves at last among the blessed “few that be chosen.”

S E R M O N X I V .

CHRIST SOUGHT AND FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.—JOHN v. 39.

IN the remarkable address, of which these words form a part, our Lord is engaged in proclaiming and enforcing His dignity, personal and official; and it is in order to confirm His assertions that He makes the appeal they contain. He had been challenged, by the cold-hearted hypocrisy of the Pharisaic Jews, for the crime of working a miracle of mercy on the sabbath-day. The act, it might be supposed, not only as merciful but as miraculous, was its own justification; for He, who could perform it, must have had a commission from on high competent to the suspension, or even the abolition, of any ceremonial enactment. On this our Lord insists; but not on this at first. The structure of His address is indeed very observable. He *commences* with a proposition of the utmost height and universality, and He *gradually* descends to the lower topics and sources of proof. He begins (ver. 17) with an assertion of His co-equality with His Father. “Up to this moment” (sabbath-day and all days) “my Father worketh and I work;” an answer whose force and pertinency can rest only on the unexpressed assumption of a natural and inherent equality of privilege; the argument manifestly being, that, if the Father could be justified in His incessant activity, the Son must

share in the same justification, *as sharing* in the same rights and dignities. So the Jews unquestionably understood it; their persecution was built on the assumption; Christ was the daily martyr of His claims to divinity. And so, I am inclined to think, the very form of St John's comment (ver. 18) proves *him* to have interpreted Jesus also; for it seems to me highly probable that the words "making Himself equal with God," are meant by the Evangelist, not only as the Jewish charge, but as *St John's own comment* upon the claim of sonship; the accusation of assuming equality with God being not *denied*, but *justified*; and the Evangelist in that clause intending willingly to allow that, in claiming God as "His own Father" (*ἰδίου πατέρα*), Christ *had* implicitly claimed a community of nature, and thence an equality of dignity. Our Lord, however, hastens, as usual, to prevent the unity of nature from absorbing the distinctness of person, and hiding the speciality of the personal functions in this divine economy. Accordingly He descends,—if it be a descent,—(vv. 19, 20) to declare, that such is the unanimity of purpose, and the mysterious co-operation, of the Father and Son, that "the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do;" that it is the Father's to give the initiative, but that "*whatsoever* the Father doeth the Son doeth likewise." *In* this, or *after* this, He passes (vv. 21–30) into His mediatorial subordination, and pronounces that the bestowal of life, and the dispensation of judgment, are committed to His administration.

And now, having published these lofty characteristics of His nature and office, He comes at once upon the question of *credentials*. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." But He had a manifold evidence, distinct from His own. He had the evidence of his father, speaking from heaven, and speaking in the awful language of miracles; He had the evidence of St John the Baptist, till then the greatest born of woman; and, finally, he had the evidence of the text, the evidence of the Scriptures. The transition

to this topic is effected in the preceding verse: "Ye have not *His word* abiding in you, for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. . . . Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me." The voice of the Father from heaven, and the voice of God in His word, He classes as two forms of the same general attestation: "Ye have neither heard *His voice* at any time nor seen *His shape*, and ye have not *His word* abiding in you." You have neither witnessed Him speaking immediately, nor understood Him speaking mediately. And if you prefer to regard the miracles as *another* conjoint department of the Father's evidence, which is perhaps the simpler way of analyzing the import of this profound passage, from ver. 31 to 40, you may (slightly altering your point of view) regard our Lord as, for the present, *waiving* the testimony of John, as belonging to an inferior class of evidences ("I receive *not* testimony from man. . . . I have *greater* witness than that of John,"—vv. 33, 36), and mainly engaged in setting forth (agreeably to his preceding statements of a commission from the Father) the threefold attestation which *the Father* had furnished to this great truth, -- the voice from heaven, the miracles on earth, and the Scriptures echoing from all past ages. God spoke in them all, and in them all he accredited Jesus as His Messiah.

"Ye search," declares Christ,—for the word may be rendered either as a command or an assertion, and the latter seems both more natural and more pointed,—“Ye search the Scriptures because in them ye think ye have eternal *life*; now these very Scriptures testify of me; and, nevertheless, ye will not come to me that ye may have the life ye seek.” “Of late you have learned to scrutinize the Scriptures, to compare, to balance, to infer. You have been taught to seek in them satisfactory and solid proofs of an eternal happiness beyond the grave; you think you have the treasure securely laid up in them; and it is true, but only true as they testify of me. Your unhappy inconsistency is this, that believing life to be in your Scriptures,

you will not believe it to be where those Scriptures have placed it. You contend with your Sadducean opponents that the promise is indeed there; but you agree with them in rejecting Him on whom the promise is suspended. Surprisingly clear-sighted to a certain point, from that point you are blind." This seems to me to be the simplest mode of connecting the sense of the thirty-ninth and fortieth verses. With the remainder of the discourse (which is partly a corroboration of this topic) we have at present no concern.

In this passage, then, thus understood (and it will not make any material difference, as to the *substance* of the argument, whether you render the first word in the imperative or indicative), our Lord may be considered as advancing two assertions; that the Scriptures of the Old Testament testify of *Him*, and that they testify of Him in the special character of a source or dispenser of eternal *life*. I will endeavor to engage you with both these topics; not in the way of minute discussion of separate passages, which would be the work of days and volumes, but in the way perhaps more calculated for pulpit utility, by large and general comment, which may subsequently serve to animate or direct your own private studies or reflections. I am about to regard the Hebrew Scriptures simply as a collection of written records, a body of writings of various dates, bearing manifestly on the same general subjects; and, for my present purpose, it would be of no importance if we received them for the *first* time into our hands, and knew little or nothing beyond what the collection itself informs us. There were certain records accounted authentic and venerable among the people, and to these, simply as written documents, and to their internal evidences, our Lord in the text referred. Let us take those Scriptures *in the mass*, and ask if their whole aspect is not essentially *predictive*, and predictive of Jesus.

I. The Hebrew Scriptures, then, themselves, and the

people and polity which form this singular subject, intimate a wonderful *future*, and point altogether to it, and are wholly inexplicable unless on the supposition of it. This at once distinguishes it from every other ancient writing of the same kind; among all national literatures this makes the Jewish unique. And what is peculiarly observable, this characteristic is neither the growth of the people themselves, nor in any respect required by their national constitution. The people, taken in the gross, appear to have, according to the record itself, acted on temporal promises; little or nothing more was exhibited to them by their guides and instructors: the "days long in the land," the "children visited to the third or fourth generation,"—these are the stimulants to endurance and obedience. And yet, though this, and only this, be discoverable on the surface, never, surely, existed writings which in themselves seem to stretch so vastly beyond any temporary scope; and which, in their very excellency, seem so perpetually and powerfully to evince, that the fate of a single nation of mankind could never cover their whole design and significancy. This is the irresistible internal argument for the genuineness and authority of the Old Testament Scriptures; the more forcible because it turns not on detached passages,—these might be called interpolations,—but on the spirit, style, and bearing of the whole. In this, however, you must not so much reason as feel; taste and imagination (the powers that are busied in the higher departments of criticism) must be called into action to appreciate the force of the argument; but thus appreciated it is irresistible. The law commands, but in a *tone* that speaks more than its own limited commands. The prophets promise and threaten: but their threats and promises swell beyond the measure of the occasion. The voice of both law and prophets is *too loud* for that little region; it is made to fill a universe. Infidels have felt this, and (as Voltaire) have ridiculed the pomp of language, with which the fortunes are predicted

of a people, whose narrow strip of country, from end to end, did not reach two hundred miles; as if this very inconsistency was not itself an internal indication of boundless prophetic purport, increasing, moreover, as it perpetually appears to do, in direct proportion to the misfortunes and degradation of the people; insomuch that the voice of prophecy is never more commanding or confident, than when the nation is all but annihilated. How short-sighted is the objection; how narrow-minded the prejudice it betrays! For if a platform is to be, indeed, sought, *adequate* to be the stage on which a God shall act, shall the world itself suffice? Is Palestine more a speck in the map of the earth than the earth itself is in the chart of the visible universe?—or the visible universe in the vast array of worlds beyond our ken?—or all these together, compared with the conceptions and the dignity of the God who made them? The mote in the sunbeam, and the sun itself, are equal as regards the eternal Spirit, for both are alike incommensurate with Him! Palestine was chosen to be the temporary scene of divine agency; but every movement of that agency, as recorded in this volume, indicates that the scene was to be *but* temporary, and that this race of Jacob held in trust for the world. A double voice was given to their law; Israel might suffice to hear and to obey the one; every child of Adam was concerned to hear the other. A double voice was given to their prophets; the enemies of the chosen line might tremble at the one, but the whole earth is weak to support or echo the other. Nay, is there not something significant in the very choice of *prophecy* for the instruction of the people; of *that* beyond all other forms of miraculous interference? Was it not that the mind of this people, even when it thought but of national prosperities and national overthrows, might at least be disciplined to the attitude of expectation; that they, who were emphatically the people of the future, might have every motive resolved into hope and fear, and, carnal and confined as they mani-

festly were, might evermore be habituated to forget the thing present in the thing to come? Could I be permitted for a moment to turn from the probabilities of my argument to the facts of history, how sad a commentary do these facts, as so many centuries have witnessed them, furnish to this remark! The truth perverted becomes worse than the truth unknown, the disappointed affection turns, like the scorpion, to sting itself; and the longings that once brightly pointed Judah to her coming Messiah, their legitimate purpose past, have darkened and embittered into feverish, fruitless, visionary discontent!

Expectation, then, is the inward spirit of the Old Testament, as Fulfilment of the New. Wonderful itself, its function clearly is to testify wonders more august to come. From Moses to Malachi, these Hebrew Scriptures are, as it were, one long-drawn sigh of *sorrowful hope*; while, to make the purposed lesson of imperfection more complete, the same testimony is uttered from *every* rank and state of humanity; for of what variety of human fortune will you not find an example there? Not from Jeremiah in his dungeon alone, but from the gorgeous palace of their mightiest king, at the most consummate hour they record of earthly prosperity, comes forth the mournful strain (it is the voice not of Jewish, but of human nature): "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. . . . I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, *all* is vanity and vexation of spirit!"

Do we deny, then, that, considered in themselves, these records of the Old Testament are imperfect, incomplete, inconsistent? Nay, we admit it, and we glory in the admission. We know that they speak to Judah in language too mighty for her narrow fortunes, in language too exalted for her unenlightened corruption. We know that they promise more than they perform, that they begin what they cannot end. They "cry out of the depths;" but they cannot do more than cry. Their voice is still, "Bow thy

heavens, O Lord, and *come down*. . . . Send thine hand *from above!*" A mightier element than any they contain must indeed come down, to raise them from their prostration; a new power must be infused into the human heart, even the Spirit of God, bound up with the spirit of man by the resurrection of a God incarnate; this heavenly element must have combined with the earthly before the Law and the Prophets shall have become righteousness and fulfilment. Not from insulated predictions alone, not from separate types alone, not from occasional allusions alone, but from the whole spirit, and tendency, and bearing of the Hebrew Scriptures, was the Lord Jesus Christ justified when He declared, that "they are they which testify of Him;" that, disjointed from Him, they were a fair and elaborate structure, doubtless, but shadowy, nevertheless, and unsubstantial; while, seen in the light that His coming flashed back upon that strange story of four thousand years, every page sparkled with illumination, every sentence quickened with meaning; the whole vast mass, in all its members, the awful law, the wonder-laden history, the Psalm, of hope or penitence, the solemn proverb, the mystic prophecy,—all become instinct with new vitality, invested with the hues of the better life; yea, that body of the Law and Prophets rose, as it were, and ascended with its inspirer, Jesus, and, unchanged yet wholly changed, was with Him *glorified!*

All, then, in the Old Testament testified of restoration to come, and in the *individuality* of its types,—things definite all of them, and personal the most,—it is testified of a single personal restorer; that is, as distinguished from a general revolution, or, as added to it, it pointed to an individual revolutionizer. But of this we are to speak presently; suffice it now to say that the Old Testament, overladen by one sect of Jews, curtailed by another, candidly studied by none, witnessed internally to a mighty future. I pass not beyond its own pages, I ask not whence it came, nor how;

I ask no external confirmations from contemporary history, I interrogate the Book alone, and its answer is unequivocal. Nay, in this view, its answer is often most direct when its language is most obscure. That mysterious volume, so large, so various, whose remotest authors are a thousand years asunder, had a single character, and that character was promissory. *That* still follows it through all its many styles and all its mazy windings; *that* still is found,—yea, more distinctly caught,—in the dim recesses of those half-revealings, where it whispers more than it speaks aloud. It is, in truth, as some vast forest,—its own Lebanon or Carmel,—dusky and shadowy, yet with wondrous breaks and glimpses of sudden light, strange shapes and spectres in the gloom, and sometimes darkness thick as midnight; but a majestic spirit haunts the obscure immense,—the spirit of the future. Its presence startles us when we least expect it; and we walk with reverence and godly fear, feeling that all we see is holy, and all we see not holier still.

II. But we have said that our Lord's words imply not this alone, but more than this; that they affirm of the elder Scriptures (and in them of the dispensation which they profess to record), that these Scriptures speak of a future, which was to be illustrated by the gift of "eternal life,"—in words more distinct, that they point to death conquered by sacrifice, life won by resurrection; the "life of the spirit," in holiness here, in immortal glory hereafter. Of this, then, we should now speak as before, not with detailed reference to special passages, but in a general view of the entire. Let us stand in front of the huge edifice, not to criticize its plinths and capitals, but to take in the effect of the whole. We are not asking the shape or dimensions of the features, but the *expression* of the face. Regarding, then, successively, the *general* corroboration furnished by the Old Testament to the doctrines of atonement, of sanctification, and of immortality, we inquire, first:—

1. Did the volume of the Old Testament witness to an *atonement* as the foundation of an eternal life? There are those who boast themselves followers of Christ, and yet deny this characteristic. The impatience of *mystery*, which is so strangely short-sighted when men have to deal with the substance of a communication *from heaven*, has disabled them from discovering a propitiatory sacrifice in the *New Testament*; and the same spirit has usually advanced (on grounds of perfect consistency) either to waive the Old Testament altogether, as antiquated, local, and irrelevant to modern purposes, or to deny, by *natural* explications, every thing miraculous, and every *thing* typical in its pages. Now the object here is to get rid of *mystery*,—an object false and futile in itself, when we argue of the interferences of God with man; but let all that is claimed be conceded, and is the object yet attained? Suppose it a contest of opposite improbabilities: let every burden of miracle be thrown overboard by our adversaries, and shall they yet have lightened their vessel of mystery? shall they have presented an intelligible solution of the problem of the Old Testament? Though, in the spirit of a miserable criticism, ministering to a still more miserable philosophy, you were to evacuate that Old Testament of every express miracle it records, though you were to convert the prophets into jugglers and the people into fools, and make of our Elijahs and Isaiahhs pretenders to power and conjecturers in knowledge,—that is, though you were substantially to justify the Jews for that “blood of the prophets” which Christ charged as their crime,—could you even so clear the Old Testament of wonders? You may deny the story of miracles, but can you destroy the miracle of the story? You may discredit this volume of miracles,—for the Spirit of God does not now descend to silence its gainsayers,—but can you *unmiracle* the obstinate fact of the volume itself? Can you resolve the enormous difficulty of this history, these recorded habits, and above all, this recorded

religion? You deny, or, in confessing, you neutralize any typical purport, any prospective atonement: mark, then, the mysteries that emerge upon your own supposition. The whole spiritual system of the Hebrew Scriptures is made up of two elements, entwined with the most intricate closeness, yet absolutely opposite in character. You are then to answer satisfactorily, how it was, that every particular of a long and laborious system of minute, and often very repulsive, sacrificial observances, is found united in the same volume with conceptions of God that surpass, in their profound and internal spirituality, all that unassisted man has ever elsewhere imagined, nay, that all our modern refinement is unable to emulate? What miraculous mind was it that combined these singular contradictions? Where is there a *real* parallel to this mysterious inconsistency? Who is this strange instructor, or series of instructors, that now portrays the form of the one everlasting essence hid in the veil of attributes that are themselves unfathomable, and now issues the most minute and elaborate directions as to the proper mode and the tremendous obligation of slaughtering a yearling lamb, and this as the duty required of him who would approach *that eternal Spirit*? Who is he that, at one moment, enounces the simplest, sublimest code of human duties in existence,—for even Christ abridged, not altered it;—at another, nay, in the same page, the same sentence, exhorts, with equal earnestness, to the equal necessity of drenching the earth with animal blood as the appointed path of human purification? Here then is, in the very texture of the Old Testament and its polity, a mystery greater than any you can escape by denying its predictive import. It is altogether insoluble on any supposition but the one, the supposition which alone can elevate ceremonies to the dignity of moral obligations. Judaism with a typified atonement may be a miracle or a chain of miracles, but Judaism without it is a greater miracle still!

Impressed, if he is impressed, with such considerations as these, the opponent of "mystery" has, however, a subterfuge in *reserve*. An excuse for suspense is quite as welcome as an excuse for disbelief. He contents himself with observing, that the Atonement is a mystery, and that these difficulties about the Jewish ritualism are certainly somewhat mysterious also: "Let us, then," he argues, "neutralize them by each other, and leave the question as indeterminate." Certainly, if we can pronounce the improbabilities equal on both sides. But *can* we? The improbabilities of the Jewish system, considered apart from its fulfilment in the Christian sacrifice, are improbabilities of which we can all judge. They are in the field of our own human nature, which (whether we think it or not) is the daily study of every man that lives. On such a question we are adequate and authorized judges. When we call such things improbable, we know what we say. But the great Atonement,—who shall dare to say that he knows enough of the counsels of heaven, the requisitions of God, and His relation to man,—to pronounce *it improbable*? Who is he that comes among us in the high character of confidential secretary to the divine administration, that he can venture to affirm that God requires no suffering mediator? Where is the man or angel who has irresistibly demonstrated to the creatures of earth his accurate acquaintance with all the moral systems of all the spheres, and who, enriched with this immensity of knowledge (for nothing short of this will suffice), has at length expressly revealed it as certain, or even probable, that *the nature of God cannot* require a sacrifice as the basis of redemption? Give us the evidence of such an one, and we will consent that an atonement is "improbable." But until such testimony be exhibited, I shall be content to "search the Scriptures," and to find them, in characters of blood, "testifying" to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Until such a "friend of God" and partner of His counsel

be forthcoming, I shall be content with that "friend of God" who, in covenant and sacrifice of blood, "saw the day of Christ," and rejoiced to see it. Until such a visitant of heaven is among us, I shall ask but the testimony of Him who hath said, that "no man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven;" and who in the might and fulness of that familiarity with all the recesses of the heavenly counsels, hath Himself declared that He "came to give His life a ransom for many,"—that "His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins."

And, viewed in this aspect, there are few considerations more startling or impressive than our Lord's constant *participation* in the significant rites of the Jewish religion, during the days of his humiliation in the flesh. Of how wonderful a sight were the Jewish bystanders the unconscious witnesses, when they beheld, at each returning assembly, *Him* meekly hearing the prophecies in whom all prophecy was to be fulfilled! "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" and lo! the Inspirer is sitting at the feet of His messengers and learning the lesson He taught them! But in the calm, unmoved aspect of the Son of God, no trace can be discovered of the mighty interest He alone can take in those mysterious anticipations of Himself. One among a crowded synagogue, seldom called upon to bear an office or utter an opinion, rebuked, it may be, to the lowest place, overlooked as a poor man among his betters, and deemed altogether disqualified, by narrowness of education or capacity, for sounding the depths of the page which, but for Him—at once inspirer and object—had never existed! "This people that know not the law are cursed," and the humble artisan of Nazareth was one of "this people!" But pass from prophecy to the more vivid language of type, and contemplate Him as He comes, in meek obedience to the law, "fulfilling all righteousness," to celebrate or to witness those bloody *sacrifices* that portrayed

His own death of blood! Thrice a year he entered Jerusalem to act, more or less directly, the story of His coming sufferings. If He were present (and on one occasion we find Him in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles just after it) at the great Festival of Expiation, how profoundly must He have entered into the purport of all that solemn scene. The bleeding sacrifice at the door of the tabernacle, the guiltless animal dismissed with the imputed guilt of Israel, the blood borne by the priest into the holy of holies, —image of that celestial sanctuary He was so soon to enter with a similar offering; how must all this dumb show have addressed the Saviour's soul,—a soul in which exquisite tenderness of affection was doubtless united with intense capacities of suffering? Or consider that more domestic sacrifice in which the Jewish layman was more directly concerned, that Passover which so accurately typified the divine oblation of Christ. In this each Israelite was his own sacrificer; and often must He have beheld His brethren slay the lamb which was to represent that better "Lamb without blemish and without spot," "slain from the foundation of the world." How must the human heart of Jesus have shrunk, in such an hour, from the terrible picture of His sufferings to come! And when the bleeding knife was drawn from the quivering flesh, and the blood sprinkled at the altar-base, with what feelings did the Man of Sorrows return to share in the feast that followed? Oh! how much more than the cross was borne by the crucified Redeemer! Or rather, how daily and hourly was the cross He bore!

Abundantly, then, in all their structure and bearing, do the Scriptures and their Jewish subject attest the *Atouement* that was to found our redemption; attest it by virtue of their composition and character, and though their historical narration were nothing beyond an ideal allegory. But this witness stretches farther still. They testify not only to the cause of life, but to the life itself,—the spiritual quickening, present and eternal. Here, too, I seek not to

detain you with the separate manifestations of the blessed future, the special types that visibly embodied the invisible gift of sanctification to come,—the anointings, the washings, the solemn seclusion of the entire people from the common family of nations. I observe only the force and direction of the whole current of the scriptural records themselves, and I find it all pressing on, and gathering as it advances, to the holiness won and dispensed by Jesus.

2. It is not an easy, and it is in some sense an invidious, task, to attempt a distinction between the *characteristic* holiness of the Old and New Testaments. Any such distinction must, of course, be taken, not as above all possible exception strictly and *literally* universal, but as a general contrast, marking the *genius and spirit* of each. And, understood in this liberal construction, perhaps it might be said that the habitual sanctity of the Old Testament was *a life to God united with a life to the world also*, the loyalty of the subject to his prince, which does not interfere with a strong development of other tendencies too; while that of the Christian institute is peculiarly *a death to the world*, in order that man may enter upon a life, intimate and undivided, with God alone. How vividly this is represented in the initiatory rite of the Christian life, I need not observe. But (to avoid all misconceptions upon a matter of such moment) I will digress to say, that this great characteristic of the covenant of the Spirit does not impair the obligation or the energy of a single earthly *duty*,—of even a single *legitimate affection*; it simply destroys for ever the independent sovereignty of those principles, superadds an affection of such strength as to overcome them when they interfere, or to pervade them when they harmonize with it; subdues them to itself or subdues them altogether, and (it may be granted) disposes the mind to avoid as much as possible multiplying them, without discernible spiritual advantage. The Christian's "death to the world" amounts to simply this,—that no principle not traceable to heaven

shall be, for even an instant, recognized as the sovereign director of the soul; not merely that God shall ordinarily hold the *first place* in his deliberate calculations of opposing courses of conduct (for this the pious of all ages have admitted), but that *everything else*,—habits, affections, situations, events,—shall be connected with Him, imbued and pervaded with His light, and, as it were, *seen and known* by it alone. This total separation of every earthly bond, *considered as earthly*, and assumption of a new life at the hand of God, so that man, while on earth, *practically* lives in heaven, was not within the scheme of the Old Testament revelation, however it may appear by glimpses in the inspired writers themselves. If *they* possessed it, it was not for the public. Nor, indeed, with God *eminently* represented as a national God, and, instead of the ample expanse of heaven and of eternity, with this earth regarded as the great scene of His rewarding dispensations, is it easy to see how these views of unworldly purity could possibly have been proposed. But what is mainly to be considered at present is, that, though not directly proposed, they seem evermore to be seen in dim and distant vision, in vision that grows nearer and brighter constantly as the day of Christ approaches. David himself, the great type of Israelitish holiness, and whose language in our,—perhaps often in his own,—spiritual applications, embraces all the profoundest feelings and hopes of the Christian,—David perpetually rises above his state, beseeches a power which he can conceive but cannot compass, and seems struggling to get *beyond* his place in the progressive order of revelation. “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondersI will run the way of thy commandments *when* thou shalt enlarge my heart....I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live. My soul fainteth for thy salvation. Thy commandment is exceeding broad. Let my cry come before thee, O Lord: give me understanding!”

And as the *sacrifice* of Christ, after He had republished the Law as His own, was to be the necessary condition, and so prior to His power, of dispensing *the Spirit*,—so do we observe the very same order in the preparatory disposition of the Old Testament. There, too, the law is first solemnly enacted at Sinai, the complicated observances of sacrifice are then ordained, and the further work of sanctification comes out in gradual prominence of prediction, and at length attains its highest splendor of promise in the pages of the Prophets. You will at once perceive, how this obvious analogy between the two Testaments silences the objection of Socinians and Deists, against the additions to the Gospel, which they profess to discover in the apostolic Epistles. And in the hallowed raptures of Isaiah and his prophetic brethren, along with the promise of sanctification under the second covenant, it is impossible not to observe, in dim outline, those traits accompanying it, which accompany the *possession* of the gift in the preaching and the Epistles of Peter, and Paul, and John. The precepts of the Law are in the Law delivered with sternness and brevity, its penalties denounced with unmitigated severity; in the Prophets, a code substantially the same is presented, by transitions almost insensible, in colors softer, and richer, and more attractive. Hues from some distant glory, itself unrevealed, have fallen upon those gloomy features, and illumined them into its own likeness. Judaism in Moses and Isaiah is still, indeed, Judaism, but it is like the one landscape seen in different lights, and we can scarcely recognize it for the same! “The law of the Spirit of life” has already begun to supplant the “law of sin and death.” Whether the misfortunes of the people, knowing, as we do, how largely affliction is employed as an instrument in the hand of God, might have been concerned in fitting them to receive this higher tone of spiritual promise, it is not easy to say with certainty; but it is remarkable that it is from the depths of captivity, in the hour of bitterest bondage,

that Jeremiah and Ezekiel have reached the culminating point of the promise of holiness to come,—that great announcement of the covenant, the peculiar charter of our religion,—which you will find cited in that character by St. Paul in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. “Behold, the days come that I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers: for this is the covenant that I will make. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

If these anticipations of spiritual vitality, of life from the death of sin, be thus the constant character of the Old Testament (itself unpossessed of the gift), we may repeat that in this sense also was the Lord of glory justified, when He appealed to those Scriptures in the mass, for their testimony to Him as the Author and Giver of life.

3. It remains that we speak of the last subject of attestation, the testimony of the Scriptures to Christ, as the source of an *immortality of glory to His* followers. Few minutes are left us for this: but it need not detain us long. It seems, in relation to our subject, the topic most prominent of all; but, in truth, it is, in a great measure, *contained* in the former. Christ's atonement, Christ's gift of the Spirit, Christ's gift of glory, follow in necessary internal connection; and wherever the two former are proclaimed, the last is substantially involved. But, according to the universal law of progressive development, the Old Testament predictions become less and less vivid as we advance through the three: the earliest, the atonement, is presignified the most distinctly of all; the sanctification by the Spirit, less and more lately; the final glorification faintly, and more often by implication than assertion. Nor indeed could EITHER the present or the eternal life of the Spirit have been *adequately* manifested in type or prophecy without the OTHER; and it is remarkable that the prediction of the spiritual

covenant, which I have just cited, declares that Jehovah will become "*a God*" to his sanctified people; a phrase whose import as extending to the future world, Christ Himself, on one illustrious occasion, interpreted. The connection of the gift of the Holy Ghost with immortal glory is not arbitrary or external, but inward and essential. Many have insinuated that to insist on the heavenly recompense is to corrupt the purity of the religious motives. Deeper reflection would have taught them that, without the heavenly future, it would be impossible to preach our religion at all. Men cannot possess the *elevation* of the Christian affections on a temporal scheme, and without constant reference to a larger world as their own. Men cannot breathe the breath of heaven without the free amplitude of heaven around them. You cannot proclaim a religion built on mystical *union* with God, unless you first lift men into God's world,—into a world, therefore, of incorruption, of eternity. Even could we exclude the notion of reward altogether, our religion could not live and grow without heaven and immortality as its element. And (without arguing that, on any other supposition, their fortitude must have exceeded that of our Christian martyrs) I cannot doubt, that though, perhaps, forbidden by the Spirit to declare their convictions, except in glimpses and enigmas, the holy men of old must have lived on such a belief; that "the fathers looked not for transitory promises;" that some "sought the heavenly" country in the strength of a general dependence on the tried faithfulness of God; others, favored with visions, more or less express, of "*His day*," who now appealed in turn from their unbelieving descendants to them and *their* Scriptures for the promise of "eternal life," as being "they which testified of Him." As the hour drew nearer, we know from other sources that the conviction became more decided; some of the apocryphal books teem with notices of a future state. National misfortune drove the Jews from the present to a coming world; and before

the advent of Him who was destined to “bring them” to perfect “light,” “life and immortality” had already feebly dawned upon the beliefs or the hopes of Israel. But in Him alone was that consummated, which Israel till then could only conjecture. They might “search the Scriptures” in pursuit of “eternal life,” but in Him alone had those Scriptures centered it; in Him every scattered ray that brightened their immortal prospects converged into one resplendent focus; *His* marvellous existence alone satisfied, in one comprehensive solution, all their difficulties, accomplished all their promises, substantiated all their hopes. He was rejected, but on that rejection was built the world’s acceptance, the atonement, the illumination, the immortality. To it you owe that, redeemed from dumb idols, *you* can this day expatiate at will through the old Jewish inheritance, once so jealously guarded; that you can “search the Scriptures,” and, discerning on every page the hidden name of Jesus, can hear them whisper of “eternal life,” but only as they speak of Him, who is the sole dispenser of the priceless wealth of immortality.

SERMON XV.

HUMAN AFFECTIONS RAISED, NOT DESTROYED, BY THE GOSPEL.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.—1 TIMOTHY iv. 17.

THE business of the pulpit, my brethren, is to take man as it finds him, though not to *leave* him as it finds him. Its position places it in the midst of a lost and degraded world, and it must regard that world as such without qualification or compromise, or else miss of its proper destination. Christianity itself, as recognized in Christian lands,—what is it but (as it were) a vast *medical* establishment for diseased minds? And the functions of the pulpit,—what are they but the solemn and public tender of divinely authorized remedies to the assembled patients in each ward of that mighty hospital, the sin-afflicted world? The physicians may vary in skill or activity,—the sufferers in the virulence of the evil; but the relation between them remains substantially unchanged. Nor does it affect the truth of the representation that, in a vast majority of instances, the sick are unsuspecting of their sickness; any more than the confidence of the insane would be accepted as evidence of sanity. The ignorance is *a part* of the disease, and the first step to health is to know how far we are from it. The pulpit, then, I repeat, must take man exactly as it finds him, with all his multitude of passions and pre-

judices around him; with his discontented, yet perversely obstinate devotion to this world, and his feeble aspirations after a better. It must take the whole mass as it moves in the crowded walks of common life, and not any imaginary or fictitious humanity;—it must take it, that, purifying, directing, strengthening these weak elements, it may, in the energy of the Spirit of God, mightily accompanying the Word He once gave, mould them into a better harmony, and, of these rude materials of intellect and affection, frame a “Temple of the Holy Ghost” for time and for eternity!

“Of these materials,” I say, for here is the point. The Apostle sets before us, in the text, two applications of the *same human affection*. He bids us not to “trust in uncertain riches,” but to trust “in the living God.” He assumes that there is in the heart of man the tendency to dependence upon something beyond itself, yet intimately connected with itself; and, above all (and as the chiefest instance of the principle), upon that wealth, which is the pledge and representative of all earthly enjoyment, and which is thus the great mediator between the heart and the world that attracts it. He assumes that this trusting impulse exists, and he would not *destroy but reform* it. He would exhibit the true and eternal object for a tendency in itself indestructible; and would intimate that there is prepared for the just desires of the soul a sphere of being, adequate to these desires, and from which the present detains us, only as the counterfeit and mockery of it! On the one hand, “*uncertain riches;*” on the other the parallel announcement, that “*God giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*” And thus the Spirit, that spoke in the exhortation of Paul, instructs in the great truth, that the faculties of men are themselves a mechanism for eternity; that it is not *they*,—it is not Love, and Reliance, and Hope, and Desire,—but their habitual objects, that man must toil to change; that if your worldliness assume (as in the text) the form of unbounded *trust*, to be a disciple of the mighty Master, you must not

cease to trust, but, with a thousandfold force, concentrate all the energies of your dependence upon "the living God;" in short, that you must be the man you were, but not *where* and *as* you were,—the same faculties, but not the same uses; even as the breathing organs of a human body are still substantially the same, when at one hour inhaling pestilence and ruin, at another drawing the pure and blessed air of morning in the open landscape, and with all the happy consciousness of life, and health, and vigor.

The text, then, invites us to regard the general question of the religious affections in this aspect, and the more imperatively, that in our ordinary discussions of the spiritual life, it seems to be constantly misconceived or exaggerated. The text exemplifies one instance which, in its general application, pervades the whole intercourse of God and man,—the principle, namely, of the preservation in the renewed nature of the whole heart of man, with all its multitude of feelings and affections, the only element absolutely new being the higher and holier direction which is impressed on them by the energy of the Spirit of the living God. On this important matter, then, I shall first endeavor briefly to engage your attention, and I shall then attempt to illustrate the melancholy extent of the actual perversion of our nature, by showing how, even in their wanderings, these affections betray the higher purpose for which they were primarily intended, and how,—more especially in the instance noted in the text, the "trust in *riches*,"—man still unconsciously invests with the very attributes of perfect felicity, of heaven, and of God, the earthly idol to which he sacrifices both!

There are those, then, who speak with solemn and prophetic truth of the change which comes over the aspect of the human soul, when, for the first time "awaking to righteousness," it is introduced (while yet in the world of time) into the eternal world, and becomes cognizant of the glories, till then unseen, that surround "the throne of God

and of the Lamb." They tell us, and how truly do they tell us!—that such a change as this in importance stands alone in human life; they say, or might say, that all the variations of fortune, in her wildest caprices, lifting peasants to a throne, and depressing kings to a dungeon, are idle as the changeful shadowings of an evening cloud, when compared with that solitary hour, when He who "stands at the door and knocks" is first consciously admitted by the loving heart of a repentant believer; that the one class of changes are those of a world itself the very type of change; the other the revolution of the destinies of an eternity, witnessed by all enraptured heaven, and of which ten thousand angels are the historians. This surely is not to exaggerate, it is simply to describe, that transcendent event in the spiritual world,—the conscious re-creation of a human soul after the image of the God who formed it.

But when, from the dignity and the circumstances of the change, men pass to define its *nature*, there is often, it seems to me, much inaccuracy and some imprudence in their statements. We find it sometimes described as if no one element of human nature were to remain in the regenerate spirit. The declaration that a new heart is bestowed is taken in almost the fulness of a *literal* acceptance. All the old machinery of humanity is discarded; the "works" are (as it were) taken out of the case of the instrument, and a totally new organization of passions and affections provided. The spiritual renewal is thus falsely, I think, and dangerously, made to consist, not in "setting" *our* emancipated "affection upon things above,"—not in the privilege of having "*the whole body, and soul, and spirit* preserved blameless until the coming of Christ,"—but in the acquisition of some indescribable affections (if such they may be called), which, though they be named love and desire, are no longer human love and human desire, but differing almost as much, it would seem, from these affections as they are in our hearts, as love and hate differ from each other!

Hence that mystic and dangerous mode of representation too common among a large class of teachers, which would exalt the "love to God" (for example) beyond all human conception, not merely in the dignity of its *object* (in which, I need not say, no language could overstate it), but even in the very nature of the feeling; as if the love of a devoted friend was one thing and intelligible, but the love to God quite another affection, and all but incomprehensible! Or, again, it is the same injudicious and unwarrantable exaggeration, which represents that state of the soul in regard to Christ Jesus, which forms the inward human condition of our justification, and the fundamental element of the spiritual life, the state of *faith*, as something in its own nature totally distinct from faith as exercised upon any other object,—as consisting in some mysterious "apprehension," for which it would seem a new *faculty* must be miraculously provided, as assuredly no one of the ordinary faculties of an average human mind at all answers to its description, or is competent to its supposed functions. The error of all such cases is the same,—the notion that in the work of renewal *new* faculties are given us, instead of a new *direction* to the old ones; the notion that God *annihilates* human nature when He only perfects it, and that the proper office of the Holy Spirit is to evacuate our former being, instead of taking it as the basis of His mighty work,—to *destroy* the channels themselves, instead of *cleansing* their polluted streams, and *then replenishing* them forever with the waters of Paradise!

This question, my brethren, of the *true* nature and extent of the graces of the Spirit, is, be assured, no matter of mere speculation; there are many reasons why it is of direct and practical importance. Over and above the general advantage of distinctness and simplicity in all our apprehensions of the work of God in the heart of man, and the gross injury done to religion by dissociating it from the plain and familiar laws of our nature, as if, because "the ground

whereon thou standest is *holy*," it therefore ceases to be a part of our native *earth*;—beyond this, I say, there is in the *immediate practical* bearing of the case, much that invests with especial peril all error and enthusiasm concerning it. As long as men conceived that the religious affections are in their essence wholly different from every other affection, they will inevitably conclude that the training and *discipline* for them must be itself equally different. The path of holiness becomes at once clouded with obscurity, and the rules, which are of universal application in the formation of daily character, become (so contrarily to the Scripture teaching) totally inapplicable to the regulation of progressive godliness. But when it is clearly felt that man, born for God, has within him the very faculties that God, operating by His eternal Spirit, would direct to Himself; that there are, in the texture and substance of our nature, the rudiments of eternal life, though distorted and degraded; that we are to "love, not the world, nor the things of the world," but with the *very same* affection to "love the Lord our God," that we are (as in the text) not to "trust in uncertain riches," but with the *very same* fulness of devoted reliance, as again in the text, to "trust in the living God;"—*then* the simplicity of the conception gives simplicity to all its consequences; our way is open and unambiguous; and we see at once that, if we would be the servants of a heavenly Master, we must apply and sanctify to His blessed service the very maxims, which years of melancholy experience have taught us are all-powerful in binding our slavish affections to the bondage of the world! We vanquish Satan with his own weapons, and all our "knowledge of the world" will only instruct us how to soar above it! The wretchedness of the past itself becomes our teacher in the art of happiness; for as long as the faculties and feelings of our nature remain (and *they must* in themselves remain) the same, there is not one rule of ordinary experience more capable of fortifying us in ruin than, properly applied, it

may tend to make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light!"

So far for the general principle involved in the particular exhortation of the Apostle, the principle that the same affections which cling to the lowly earth are those which must struggle, under celestial guidance, to find their rest in God. "Trust not in riches, but [trust] in the living God!" Blessed invitation! How it exalts, even while it reproves, our fettered nature! How, from the very depth of our infatuation, it unfolds its glorious contrast,—the bright story of our true, though forgotten destinies,—the title-deed and charter of our neglected immortality! Trust, yes, trust with a devotedness such as the wildest frenzy of avarice has never exhibited! Trust, and fear not! It is among the noblest energies of your being,—it was never given in vain. Trust, but "trust in the living God!" Preserve unbroken every element of your affections; they are all alike the property of heaven. Be ambitious, but ambitious of the eternal heritage. Let avarice be yours, but avarice of celestial treasures. Covet esteem, but esteem in the mind of God and the circles of the blessed. Labor after knowledge, but let it be "the light of the knowledge of the glory of *God* in the face of Jesus Christ!" Yearn after sympathy, but seek it where alone it is unailing,—in Him whose essence from eternity is love, and who became man that He might humanize that awfulness of celestial love to the tenderness of a brother's. The father of our race had all these affections when alone with God in paradise; objects to meet and satisfy them He who gave them would never have failed to supply in a world of innocence. Be it ours to find in the new world unveiled in the Gospel the true materials of these holy desires, and so to train them while on earth for the society of heaven.

I have but this moment glanced at a topic which might well demand deeper and fuller illustration. I mean the change which the fact of the Incarnation of God must

rightfully make in all that concerns the laws and regulation of the human affections. For, after all, these affections do, doubtless, strive, in the first instance, towards human objects; human themselves, they naturally cling to the human outside and beyond them. Ever since God became incarnate, this tendency precludes not their direct passage to heaven; nay, it quickens and guides it. Hence we can perceive one of the reasons why the practical morality of the Jewish period was, in many things, especially in the deeper spiritual government of the heart and thoughts, tolerated at a lower point than is permitted in the Church of Christ. The affections that tend to God, the "theopathic" affections (to use a phrase of Hartley's), were not yet provided with their object in all its human fulness and attractiveness. It would have been little short of miracle, that even the most pious should maintain the state of perpetual contemplative affection towards the awful essence of the unmingled God. But when that God became man this difficulty was removed. The direct pathway to heaven was opened to the human heart. Man, seeking his own image, finds it *there*, himself in all but sin; he is "drawn by the cords of a man," and to a man; the second table of the Law (as St John has hinted, 1 John iv. 20) leads to the first; and, in a manner, the love of man is itself but sublimed and purified, when it passes into the love of that God who, though God, is man also. In this view we see how just are the higher requirements of the Christian rule of perfection; how, when it presents a mightier source of attraction in heaven, and one so exquisitely qualified to win to it our whole actual nature, it fairly demands that our affections shall, with a new and corresponding energy, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

From these general considerations,—which, I trust, have not been without their advantage in directing the views of those, at least, among you, who have learned to sanctify

their *understandings*, as well as their affections, to the service of God, by *reflecting* on the work of divine grace in the heart of man,—let us for a while descend to a closer contemplation of the Apostle's charge to his convert. And the more you regard the passage, the more will you perceive, that such views as those I have sketched were, in substance, the views which occupied the inspired teacher. His whole object is manifestly to contrast the two rivals for the human heart, the worlds visible and invisible; and hence it is that the text before us is the natural sequel to the preceding verse, where the glory of the eternal God is unveiled in all its majesty as the object which is to fix the affections of man. There is, proclaims St Paul (ver. 15), a "blessed and only Potentate," who is hereafter to determine, "in *his own time*" (as it is emphatically called), the appearing of Christ Jesus in glory. This Being demands, as His inalienable right, all the energies of all the affections; for no inferior claimant can interfere with Him, who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." This Being is above change in the serenity of His own incommunicable attribute of self-existence, for He "only" (ver. 16) "hath immortality." This Being is, in His pure Deity, beyond human access, for He "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto;" yea, except as visible in the face of Christ Jesus, He is removed from all human perception, for Him "no man hath seen nor can see." But, though thus mysterious in His nature and properties, this great Being exists, is around us, within us, sustains and upholds us; has, by the adoption of our nature, descended to meet us; has shed His own light upon our dust, and consecrated our very weaknesses by for a time assuming them; and *therefore* it is that, with St Paul, *we* likewise echo the note of praise, "to Him be honor and power everlasting!"

Then comes the exhortation. Seeing that such a privilege as this is ours (ver. 17), "charge them that are rich in this world," that they interpose not a veil between them-

selves and this Father of their spirits, or suffer the clouds and vapors of earth to sully or eclipse the beams of this eternal sun. "Charge them, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy!"

I mean not, however, to follow out the purport of all these pregnant words; I must, at the same time, for distinctness, ask you, in passing, to observe the *subject* of the charge, "them that are rich in this world;" the natural *consequences* imputed, self-exaltation,—“that they be not high-minded;” and, as its cause, a grovelling confidence in (as the more emphatic original has it) “the uncertainty of wealth:” and then the contrasts uplifted to every member of the statement; self-trust opposed to trust in God; perishableness to the “*living*” and eternal God; and that dependence on earthly resources which produces the wretched and contradictory self-confidence of the worldling, to the blessed dependence of the believer on those spiritual supplies which exceed them alike in extent, in liberality, and in consolation (for He “giveth us *all things richly to enjoy*”), and the constant experience of which fortifies the trust in God, or, if it ever excite any form of “*self-confidence*,” can only excite it as a *reflection* of that confidence in *God*, by which the disciple, identifying himself with his Master, feels, that the power of heaven pledged for him becomes, as it were, his own, and that all the choicest graces of heaven are made over to him as, in a manner, *his* celestial property, a divine freehold held under God, but permitted still to be held as his own!

Such is the analysis of the exhortation in the text; it is well minutely to meditate on it; but, as I have said, into the depths and variety of these particulars I am not now about to enter. I pass at once to that second *general* lesson which, I have observed to you, was involved in the very parallelism of the text; not merely what we have already insisted on,—the contrast of the visible and the invisible

worlds as the objects of one and the same trusting affections,—but the further and most impressive fact, that our earthly objects of pursuit are themselves clad by hope with colors that rightfully belong only to their celestial rivals; that our ordinary earthly longings themselves strain after a really heavenly happiness, while they miss so miserably the way to reach it; that, in other words, in the treasures of heaven are laid up all that you truly covet, even while, by a wretched illusion, you labor after their mockeries on earth! Surely, if this can be proved, no conceivable argument can more powerfully demonstrate, how we are made for religion, and can only find our true rest there!

Now the truth is, brethren! so wholly are we framed for the eternal world, that we must make a heaven of earth before we can fully enjoy it; that is to say, we must ideally and in the dreams of hope or fancy, invest this world with those very characteristics which are the exclusive property of the world to come,—its abundance, its dignity, above all, its unfading permanence,—before we can, with full content of heart, sit down to the feast it offers to sense and soul. God has so inwoven, in the innermost texture of our nature, the title and testimonies of the immortal state for which He made us, that, mingled with the perishable elements of earth, it is, even now, for ever around us; it rises in all our dreams, it colors all our thoughts, it haunts us with longings we cannot repel; in our very *vices* it reveals itself, for they cannot charm us till they have more or less counterfeited it: and thus, not merely “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,” but, if ye will receive it, out of the mouth of the voluptuary himself, has God “ordained praise,” the praise of those undying enjoyments, in search of which the wretch has gone astray among shadows! Our miseries are still the sublime discontent of a being too mighty for the perishable world he dwells in; a deathless spirit is impatient for its native eternity. Yes, the heir of immortality is far from the Father’s bosom, by what mysterious doom

it skills not to say; suffice it, he awakes to breathe a hostile air; he is born in the enemy's country, and amid the camp of the prince of darkness. They have trained him up among them, they have taught him (and, oh! with what fatal success!) to blaspheme his parent and despise his heritage; they would crush, if they could, every trace of his high lineage, and intercept every lingering hope that still hovers between the worlds of his birthright and of his exile. But it cannot all perish! There are aspirations turned astray, that, even in their distortion, attest their origin and purpose. There are warped, and crippled, and polluted hopes, that even from their dungeon of flesh, still cry to heaven. There are desires that, cursed with the frenzy of sin, run mad through the thronged and heated highways of the world,—yea, that are evolved in all the hideous forms of vice, and intemperance, and blood. But vice itself is not objectless; this insanity is superinduced upon sound faculties; these fires are the fires of conflagration and ruin, but they do not less than others *point to the skies!* Ay, even vice itself, could it but understand its own blind emotions, is not without its witness of immortality! Not to speak of those hours of better thought, in which the most degraded are known to catch these whispered voices from eternity, surely the very hours of highest enjoyment are not without this attestation. To be enjoyment it must be felt so; to be felt so, it must either be itself congenial with the heavenly country (as in the whole train of the benevolent affections, themselves happiness and heaven!) or else, by the accursed mockery I have denounced, invested for the time by hope and fancy with the characters which, in truth, belong only to the world of eternity and of God!

In the spirit of these convictions, turn again to the text. To whom does the Apostle enjoin the exhortation? To "them that are rich in this world." What does he here assume? He assumes the existence of wealth, and (in-

volved in that existence) the desire to attain it, which is the necessary motive for its accumulation. He assumes that there resides in the heart of man the desire to build up around it the means of perpetual enjoyment, to secure to itself the materials of happiness,—of happiness, for such is the specific essence of moneyed *wealth*, that may be independent of the moment, and which (as it were, condensed in its representative) may be preserved for a period indefinitely future. But what terms, save *these*, shall we employ, when we would depict the *heaven* of the Scripture revelation? What characters are these but the very properties of God's eternal world? And so far is it not manifest that the votary of earthly wealth does in fact, with all the energies of his nature, strain after that very security of unchangeable bliss which we preach; but, mistaking the illusory phantom, weds his whole soul to the fictitious heaven, which the powers of evil have clothed in colors stolen from the skies?

The delusion produces its own delusive results. But these also are but the shadowy copies of a bright and holy reality. Every attribute of the eager candidate for earthly happiness and security is but the poor semblance of the very state the Christian already possesses or anticipates. The rich are first warned of the peril of what is here called "*high-mindedness*," a word whose happy ambiguity perfectly corresponds to my argument. Superior to the surrounding world in what that world most prizes, the wealthy Christian, even in those early days of privation and persecution, might be tempted to betray a triumph over his less gifted brother. Are the sincerely Christian of our own days wholly unspotted of that blemish? How far the evil is aggravated among the nominally Christian it would be idle to insist. Of all temptations it is the most secret, constant, penetrating, and perilous. But as there is a worldly and Satanic "*high-mindedness*," so is this (as before) but the counterfeit presentment of a high-minded-

ness God-given and celestial. Laying deep its foundations in self-abasement, the doctrine of faith alone bestows the blessed confidence, without which the Christian may be the inconsolable penitent, the mortified ascetic, the prostrate trembler before an offended God; but without which he is, nevertheless, but half a Christian. The happy confidence of the children of God is an element which, though false teaching may exaggerate, no true teaching will ever discard. It is not for nothing that he is bid to rest upon the rock of ages, and to anticipate upon earth the repose of immortality. It is not for nothing that the justified fugitive to Christ is declared to possess "peace with God," and all its train of heavenly consequences; rejoicing in tribulations, because they bring patience, and experience, and hope; delighting in a discipline, every hour of which is refining more and more the pure gold that is to pass from the fire of earthly trial into the adorning of God's eternal temple! It is not for nothing that he is bid to "lift up his head as his redemption draweth nigh;" and, as no affliction can separate him from the love of God in Christ, so to suffer no affliction to cloud his "*joy* in the Holy Ghost;" but sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, to "stand fast in the Lord," "*rejoicing* always." And even in the earliest stages of the course which ends in heaven, there is a justifiable, though humble and moderated, self-content, inseparable from righteous self-exertion, and permitted by a gracious God to His struggling disciple; nor shall the solitary combatant with evil remain uncheered by an exulting sense that *his* cause is the right cause, that God is with him, that all the powers of good are enlisted in his behalf, and that, if he be but true to himself, he cannot fail, until Satan have dethroned the Lord of heaven! Here, then, is the "*high-mindedness*" of the Christian; here is the truth to match that worldly falsehood, that high-mindedness base and debasing; here is the bright, unchanging fire,

which the votary of this world would rake among the dust and ashes of earth to enkindle!

Once more, the "rich in this world" is warned, not merely of the peril of self-exaltation, but also of that of unbounded "*trust*" in the fleeting riches he accumulates. The contrast I need not here insist on. We have already noticed it, and the Apostle himself has expressly enforced it. The "living God" and His liberal graces arise to claim the homage of the "trusting" heart. The dependent on riches makes them his god, in making them the object of his dependence. Heaven is here again defrauded of its own, and all the charms of the divine character, the charms that fix and fascinate the adoring believer in Christ,—its abiding permanence, its just sovereignty, its fixed security, its unshaken faithfulness,—*all* are torn from the throne of God to clothe the idol of the worshipper of wealth! I need not continue the argument. You will perceive how universally it applies to all the variety of human pursuits; though unquestionably the direct pursuit of *wealth itself*, the instance presented in the text, seems formed to embody and illustrate the argument with special and singular force. But in all alike the same principle is revealed; in all alike the soul made for heaven is seen lost among heaven's shadows upon earth; it feigns the heaven it cannot find, and casts around the miserable companions, yea, around the inanimate furniture, of its exile,—the dust and clay of earth,—the attributes that belong to the God it was born to adore! Brethren, if among you there be those who fear that you may, in any degree, have thus robbed heaven of its rights, and suffered your affections to be detained on their way to God by the mockeries that belie Him, oh! learn at length to recognize the true and unchangeable happiness for which you were framed, and seek it where God Himself has placed it! The heart and affections of man are too precious to be wasted thus. Lay not out your rich capital of faith, and hope, and love, and admiration,

upon the poor, precarious investments this world at best can offer you! Impress upon your hearts the conviction,—and say, is it not a *proud* conviction?—that not one energy of all this host of energies but was primarily designed for heaven; and open, in this blessed belief, the full tide of your affections to that world where alone they can ever find repose! Realize the presence of God by faith, know Him, as He is in Christ Jesus, and, I will not say *love* Him,—to know Him thus *is* to love Him!

This is that life in the world, and yet above the world, which old philosophy saw in the dim distance, and fondly persuaded itself it sometimes reached. Vain illusion! for what is all ancient learning but the ever-varied expression of one mighty want, one consuming hunger of the heart, for that which the Desire of all nations came to give? He had prophets to publish His coming in type and in prediction; but not these were his prophets alone. Forerunners had He, mightier and more awful still, hopes and fears, and the dread oracles of conscience, and the baffled aspirations of four thousand years of suffering men; yea, the universal heart of mankind, from out of the depths, invoked the presence of the Restorer, though it could not read its own involuntary prophecy. Above all did Death itself, and all its dread accompaniments, proclaim a mystery to be solved alone by “Him that was to come.” The dying heathen, in that awful loneliness of spirit which is the most fearful attribute of Death,—all the busy scenery of life melting into shadows around him, as it must in that hour around each of us,—but with nothing before *him* but the blackness of annihilation,—he, in his very helplessness of despair, was the symbol of that want the Lord of life came to satisfy. He *has* come, and He has shed light upon the grave and beyond it; and shall we not walk as “children of the light” He has given? The humblest pupil in our Christian schools, knowing more of the history and destinies of man than the great teachers of old ever dared even to conjecture,

shall not our life be a life beyond theirs? And if they could feel that there is that in us, that claims nothing short of God for its object, shall not we, who know this for a fact, surpass them who dreamed it for a possibility, and, rising habitually into the eternal world which is our home, learn, with all the forces of our hearts, human indeed, but exalted to things divine, "to trust not in uncertain riches," not in aught else that is uncertain, unsatisfying, unenduring, "but in the living God?"

SERMON XVI.

THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

For David said, The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto His people.—
1 CHRONICLES xxiii. 25.

MY brethren! these are words of weight to reflective and feeling hearts. In these simple words we may truly say, that the peculiar and pre-eminent gift which our religion promises to confer, is, in a mystic and symbolical form, set before us. The rest which, externally and nationally, David here congratulates his land on attaining, prefigures deeper realities; it speaks to us of that rest which “the whole creation” naturally “groaneth and travaileth for;” of that rest which our God hath ever proclaimed, as the attribute of His own mighty essence, and the exclusive blessing of His eternal kingdom. The good king of Israel felicitates his subjects on their happy privilege of living under the shadow of the Most High, of being the peculiar people of Him to whom all the tribes of the earth owe allegiance, and, specially, of now possessing that mark of His favor, which is implied in being permitted to close with a period of rest the long and stormy annals of their previous national history. But do you suppose that *his mind*, ever illumined with predictive knowledge, and ever glowing with those high-wrought spiritual affections that in good men’s hearts are themselves a kind of prophecy of a blessed future,—do you suppose that the mind of him who so often wished for “the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest,”

gave no deeper significancy to his words, when he spoke of the "rest" which "the Lord God had given to His people?" The author of Psalms, which are, to this day, the best expressions the Church possesses of its highest Christian experience,—Psalms, which, wherever we go in spiritual feeling, we shall find have been there before us;—the man, whose fervent and tender heart gave utterance to such songs as these, we may well believe, had brighter hopes of rest than any national prosperity could ever answer. He must have known and felt that external peace is of little or no value, save as it tends to allow the cultivation of the interior peace "which passeth understanding;" that instruments cannot harmonize *together* to any purpose, when each is not in tune *with itself!*

But, besides these holy aspirations and just convictions, which belonged to such a heart as that of David, it is impossible not to feel, that the whole mass of the Old Testament language, in describing national favors, points naturally to higher and better graces. The soul, whose gratitude glorified God for the wealth of a favored country, was already prepared to glorify Him for the more precious internal riches of His gracious Spirit.

I. In the mysterious polity of the people of Israel, spiritual and temporal blessings were so closely allied, that the same language might naturally be employed to signify *either*. To a people who lived under the direct government of God, temporal felicity was the consequence, and thence the indication, of divine favor; and when once the vast conception of immediate divine agency is introduced into the minds of men, it can scarcely lie idle there. When, with the conviction (founded on palpable evidence of sense and experience) of *special divine superintendence*, was combined the pure and lofty *moral nature of the divine governor*, as revealed in the law issued by Moses, it is inconceivable but that the higher class of Israelitish minds, the holy and meditative class, must often have felt, that the mass of ordi-

nances which surrounded them were truly meant as types of some more profound spiritual realities, and that their whole national history was intended, in some secret way, to image forth a moral history, wider in its purpose and extent, and more adequate to the power and dignity of a God whom, at the very time they were exulting in His *special* favor, they well knew to be the God of the whole earth as well as of the territory of Israel, yea, even "a God whom the heaven of heavens could not contain." Among our Scriptures of the New Testament, we possess an invaluable tract, whose especial purpose is to unfold the true purport of that dialect of things symbolical, through which it pleased God to address the people of Israel. I allude, as you know, to the Epistle to the Hebrews. In that Epistle we are taught to understand the prophetic language of *ceremonies*; and, in the sacrifice of Christ, to contemplate the one substance of so many typical shadows. But we can also read more than this in the inspired interpretation of inspired rites, furnished by the Spirit of God in that Epistle. We can perceive that God spoke in a dialect of *events*, no less than in a dialect of *ceremonies*; that the history and fortunes of Israel were meant as truly (though not indeed in the same degree) to foreshadow interior truths; and that the Jewish student, who in a fitting spirit meditated over the records of his country, might detect there the laws of God's *spiritual*, as really as of His temporal, providence, and become, in a manner, an anticipated Christian! Thus it is, brethren, that the Old Testament becomes to us a symbolical history, not only of the facts that secure our justification, but also of the grace that constitutes or sanctification. To evince how truly the history of the Old Testament addresses the *internal experience* of Christians, I might refer you to the eleventh chapter of that interpretative Epistle to which I have drawn your attention. You will there find the radical virtue of *Christianity*, the grace of faith, made to be the moving principle of the whole *Jewish*

history, as far as it was a history of successful achievements; and the history itself, under God's guidance, arranged in such a manner as to display the reality and power of that principle; so that Christianity shall appear, not so much to require a new *virtue*, as to present a new *object* to a pre-existing virtue. But I prefer to turn your attention to *another* part of the same Epistle, not only because it has direct reference to our *immediate* subject, but because it carries the value of the Old Testament histories a step,—and a very important step,—farther. It establishes that they contain not only a series of symbolical representations of the *atonement sacrifice*, and constant instances of the grace that apprehends it, but also hints and shadows of the rewarding *blessedness* which consecrates each heart that, relying upon that sacrifice, walks holily with God. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle, it is shown that the “rest” which the Israelites enjoyed in the land of promise, no less than the rest of the Sabbath-day, was symbolical of the repose of the persevering Christian. It is shown, moreover, that specially through the mouth of *David* (whose words we are this day considering) the Spirit of God presignified *this rest*. And though it is commonly held that the Apostle, in this passage of his Epistle, solely has regard to that *eternal* rest which remains, beyond the grave, to the faithful people of God, I confess that I cannot consent to limit the purport of his expressions to that exclusive scope. I believe that he speaks generically of the blessed rest of a devoted believer; a rest not indeed *consummated* until the gates of the grave are passed, but begun before they are reached; and that, while he directs the attention of his readers to the repose of heaven, as the noblest instance of the peace which he is eulogizing, it is *only as the noblest instance* that he cites it. “We which have believed *do enter into rest*,” he declares; and if the propriety of this version be questioned, as, on the ground of a peculiar idiom of present for future, it has been, I cannot but think that the reasoning in the tenth verse of the

chapter is of itself sufficient to demonstrate, how comprehensive was the view which the Apostle, in this place, was taking of the "rest" of a Christian spirit. Comparing the Sabbath of God's rest at creation with the Sabbath that is left to the people of God, he justifies the comparison by urging, that "he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." This, surely, would seem to show that *when* we cease from "our own works" the sacred rest commences. What, then, are "our own works?" We may perhaps derive some light from the contrasted expression in the second chapter and twenty-sixth verse of Revelation: "He that keepeth *my works* unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." By "our own works," therefore, I would understand all those wretched and laborious ways of life, which have their origin and end in the corrupted principles of our own hearts; as contrasted with those ways of life and happiness which at once become ours, and with them a sabbath-rest of spirit, when (and surely *this* is before the grave), abandoning all the miserable devices with which the wisdom of this world endeavors to delude itself into fictitious happiness, we cast our sins upon the sacrificed Lamb of God, our cares upon the Father of mercies, and, in the bright confidence of faith, walk humbly on to heaven feeling already within us the dawnings of the heaven we are approaching!

II. I say then, brethren! that it is not unwarrantable for us to conjecture that, in the joyous utterance of his inmost heart, contained in the text, David insinuated profounder truths than lie on the surface of his words; that when the patriot cried that "the Lord God of Israel had given rest unto *His people*," he was not more the patriot of Israel than of mankind; or, at least, that the Spirit of God spoke through his lips with a higher purpose, to be explained and developed by the events of subsequent ages. But, even though the significancy of his words was of a transient and temporary

nature, it is impossible for us not to regard, with interest and curiosity, the important crisis on which they were spoken. The pious King had just organized all the officers connected with divine worship, upon a footing suitable to the new service upon which they were to be engaged. The ark of the Lord was no longer to be borne from place to place; the visible presence of God was no longer to continue a wanderer among the homes of Israel. Change and unsettlement were to give place to permanence and repose. The ancient city of Salem, where a priest, Melchisedek, had ruled in the days of Abraham, and where a high-priest "after his order" was to offer up a mightier oblation in after ages, was selected by God, as the centre and scene of that middle dispensation, which was to connect the faith of Abraham with the sacrifice of Christ. It is not wonderful that David, looking upon the past history of his country, a history of troubles and uncertainties, a history, for the most part, of crime and punishment, and now contemplating the glorious and contrasted prospect of settled peace, should have burst forth in gratitude and joy. The light of divine favor, which before had gleamed upon Israel in sudden and transient flashes, seemed now to fix, like a noon-day sun, in steady and continuous lustre. And he himself, who had been so strangely chosen for the purpose by the Lord, had performed a distinguished part in this great revolution. *He*, as a warrior, had begun what his son, as a man of peace, was to consummate. The God of Israel, in permitting His ark to be deposited in a permanent abode, seemed to guarantee the eternal glory of the city of David. And it seemed at length that the Lord was about to give His people the proof of His peculiar favor which they might naturally have expected, by actually exalting them to the highest temporal position among the nations of the earth, and by making the divine glory on the mercy-seat the centre from which the deputed authority of God was to radiate to the circumference of the world! "The Lord God of Israel

hath given rest unto His people, *that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever!*"

Whether, and how far, the King of Israel, when he spoke these words, sympathized with such lofty expectations as those, or to what extent his prophetic vision corrected all exaggerated anticipations of this kind, it would not be very easy to determine. His high spiritual affections, doubtless, led him to anticipate a purer internal felicity than any which temporal distinctions could bring, as alone worthy of the moral character of the holy God whom he served. But his deep patriotism, his sympathy with the welfare of his native land, might by an amiable weakness, give to these feelings a more earthly turn. With such an equality of rival affections, a direct revelation from heaven alone could turn the balance; and though we know that David was destined to be the channel of much of our most definite Christian prophecy, we cannot be certain how far he understood the purport of what he prophetically declared, and how far the words of his utterance, which illumine our convictions at this day, illumined his own, when he spoke or wrote them.

But, whatever was the measure of knowledge vouchsafed at that period, how utterly would *he* have been deceived, who entertained such expectations of the future glory of Israel as I have mentioned! It was the destiny of that country, after a brief period of prosperity, to separate into rival dynasties, to run through a course of much iniquity, to despise constant, reiterated warnings, and at length to merge in utter ruin, undestroyed, indeed, but preserved only as a monument of God's abiding vengeance. But mark the unsearchable depths of the purposes of Providence! These national misfortunes brought in universal blessedness. Israel fell to prepare the salvation of mankind; and the "rest," which the Lord God denied His people, was denied, only that an everlasting rest might be secured to His spiritual people for ever! Well might the

Apostle, who was chosen as the chief laborer in this extension of the kingdom of God, exclaim when He contemplated that great revolution: "Oh! the depth of the riches, and the wisdom, and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

III. If, then, my brethren! "there remaineth a rest to the people of God," through Christ, which was outwardly and temporally refused to the people of God in Israel, it becomes us to secure this great blessing as the sole or chief object of existence. "Let us therefore fear," says the Apostle, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it!"

Brethren! this rest which "the Lord God of Israel" bestows on His spiritual Israel,—“that they should dwell in Jerusalem (even the heavenly Jerusalem) for ever,”—is, I must once more remind you, no unattainable blessing even on this side of the grave. It is the mark of a poor spirit to be satisfied with small things! Believe it, we never received the principle of *ambition* for nothing! Set it to work on its proper objects, and it is a noble element of our nature. Alas! we seem to covet every happiness but *religious* happiness; we spurn the idea of inferiority in every pursuit, but that in which the prize is an immortal crown! I know not your personal histories; I have never inquired into the special dissatisfactions of those who now hear me; "the heart knoweth its own bitterness," and "a stranger intermeddeth not" either "with its joy" or its sorrow. But in addressing an assembly of human beings, I need not doubt, that I am addressing many whose hearts are asking for a happiness which the circumstances of life deny them. I need not doubt, that there surround me numbers, whose hourly experience presents them with causes, continually recurring, of discontent with the ordinary course of life. It is said that our religion regards such discontent as a crime. In a certain sense, the doctrine is true, but in a

wider and more important sense, it is utterly false. With the temporal dispensations of God, whatever they be, a *Christian* is bound to be content; but for the man who is *not a Christian*, that discontent should be *his* portion is the prayer of mercy itself! May such a man *continue* discontented with all that the world can bring! Such discontent is the voice of the Spirit of God, for whom his nature was originally formed, calling upon him to perceive and acknowledge, that he has “no abiding city here,” and that, in seeking after “the things that belong to his peace,” he must turn to *the Prince of Peace!* Glorious discontent indeed,—though it be the misery of this world, it is the truest testimony to the inherent dignity of our fallen nature! What some dreamer imagined as to the *structure of the earth* we live on, is a truth as regards *our own internal nature*. We are indeed a fragment struck from the great source of light and heat, from the sun of eternal righteousness; and if the force that wilfully separates us from our origin would but cease to operate, we should return to our native birth-place, even the bosom of our Father,—we should fly to the centre of all good, and there abide in blessedness for ever!

Now, my brethren! to effect this union is the great object of our religion; “CHRIST THE MEDIATOR” is the link that binds us to the centre of everlasting happiness. He is, in His own profound words, describing this spiritual mediation,—“the way, the truth, and the life.” He is “the way” that leads to truth and life, “the truth” through which we must behold the life, and “the life” which, as opposed to death and imperfection leading to death, is the perfection and consummation of all conscious natures. Christ, and Christ’s law, is the true answer to all these discontents which harass and afflict you. If it could not give such an answer it would not be worth your attention. Observe now, in a few words, whether it is not formed to produce the true internal peace. Your *own prayers*, and the *Spirit of God* that animates and that answers them, must bestow the *real-*

ities of these truths; I only ask you to acknowledge is not *the machinery* prepared, if you would but take advantage of it, and effectively put it in motion!

IV. 1. I insist, then, that rest and peace must fall upon a Christian spirit,—first from its devotion to Christ Himself, and its devoted imitation of His pure and perfect example. The life of a Christian is the imitation of Christ. “If, when we were enemies,” says the inspired reasoner, “we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, *being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*” And saved, I would again say, my brethren! by a salvation which commences even in *this life*. If, indeed and in truth, feeling that our beloved Master was human as ourselves, we would but determine to walk as He walked, to do the deeds of righteousness as He did, to love where He loved, and hate as He hated,—though ever far below our model, and though, as works of righteousness our works could command but little approbation, yet, with all this, God would look complacently upon such a state, and our conscience, which is, in some respect, the image of God upon earth, would bring us a *peace* beyond what the world could give. If by constantly regarding the character of Christ, as it is presented in the New Testament, and living in His Spirit, we would but earnestly set ourselves to copy that all-perfect example, the Apostle is our guarantee as to the consequences, when he tells us that by “beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed *into the same image*, from glory to glory!” And, among all the imitable attributes of Christ, none is more beautiful than his perfect *peace*. In His saddest hours He walked on earth as the God of it! In the midst of His affliction He was calm. He had voluntarily undertaken His humiliation, and He bore it with the quiet dignity of a voluntary sufferer. When he wished that “the cup should pass,” He ended the wish with a prayer of resignation; and when on the cross His exceeding agony burst forth in the terrific cry that “God had forsaken Him,”

we shudder at the thought, only because, in being so alien from His usual habits, it forces on us a dim conception of the depths of horror His spirit must have labored through,—how all the powers of evil must have assaulted His soul at that tremendous hour. But the celestial warrior conquered them, conquered all, and, after a dread struggle, was at length enabled to say, “It is finished,”—the most momentous sentence that was ever uttered since God said, “Let us make man.”

If you doubt whether you can attain this celestial peace of Christ, I remand you to His own words:—“*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you.*” Blessed Lord! thou dost indeed give us this peace when thou givest thyself as our example! To be thy disciples and copyists is to be at peace with everything but sin!

2. But this influence of the character of Christ becoming the great exemplar of their actions is not the only cause which works peace and rest in the hearts of His followers. The *very singleness of the object* of His hope has a power to elevate the Christian above the petty concerns of daily life. The Marthas of the world are “careful and troubled about many things;” the Marys feel that “there is *one thing* needful.” Those who have many debts often feel it a relief to exchange them all for a single creditor; he whose whole heart is bent upon reaching a single point leaves all around him on his way in equal and complete insignificance. The true peace of mind is that which resolves all into a single principle. God is *one*; let our affections but partake of the unity of that object, and we shall have reached the pathway of real and imperishable rest.

3. I might argue the same great question from the *very nature of the Christian affections*, affections whose very exercise is peace and happiness. For, unlike certain vain and false systems of human device, Christianity does not suppress those affections, but *directs them*. In the very *exercise of*

faith, and hope, and love, there are the materials of peace, even apart from the *subject* of these feelings. The mere position of a mind believing, and trusting, and loving, is one of real happiness. But I do not delay you on this point, because I wish you finally to weigh that great motive to Christian peace and happiness which arises from *its hope being anchored in a future world.*

4. In such a state as ours, unless the eternal world in some manner becomes the guarantee of this, we are the slaves of every accident, without any hope for the future, any consolation for misfortune, any substantial or permanent motive for conduct, any reward for endurance, any guide for life. To support, still more to exalt us, heaven must mingle with earth. You know that to direct a vessel upon the ocean there must be two elements at work, the air must modify the agency of the water; you know that to set a vessel at rest there must be more elements than one employed, and the earth must afford the means of resisting the breezes and the sea. Now this comparison, rude as it is, may assist you in conceiving the position of man in the voyage of his life. The earthly and the heavenly elements must combine, or we are powerless. Confined to the single element of our corrupted nature, we are the sport of every accident, we have no rules for our navigation. If you doubt it, recur to your own experience as to the fortunes of the exclusively worldly, and you will find such, running adrift without any real principle of motion or certainty of course, and upon a sea already bestrewn with shipwrecks! But they who join to the human nature the higher element, *they* have a power that guides them to the everlasting haven! To have the great object of our thoughts placed beyond the chances of human life is to place ourselves beyond them! Our hope "entereth into that within the veil!" The Christian lays hold of a chain which is bound to the throne of God; he links himself to the eternal certainties of nature; the immutable

attributes of the God of the universe are pledged for his security! As the certainty of the end is greater than that of the means, and as the dead world that surrounds us exists, doubtless, with a main view to the Christian people of God,—the less perfect being ever subordinate to the more perfect,—so we may say that the firmest laws of nature and man, the very foundations of the world that now is, are *less* firm and durable than the purpose of God to make His faithful people happy! Hence the awful words of our Lord: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” The laws that bind together the elements of the universe may vanish and give place to new relations and connections; the law that binds together the eternal sovereignty of Christ with the happiness of His people, is unchangeable as God Himself! Shall we call it less than *insanity*, the perversity that sends men from such promises as these to grovel in the delusive felicities of worldly pleasure, that all experience proves to be short and bitter mockeries? Shall we call it less than absolute *idiotcy*, the *worse* perversity that blinds even the afflicted, those who have never known that dream of worldly prosperity,—to the free offers of the everlasting Consoler? If such dreamers be among *you*, God calls upon them to awake from their visions, to awake even now to righteousness and peace; unless they would defer their time of awaking to that momentous hour when the sound of the trumpet shall awake them, to know (how dreadful, if to know then for the first time!) the terrible realities of eternity! But for the *people of God*, the children on earth of faith, and hope and love,—let the passage on which we have been commenting speak for them,—“the Lord God hath given rest to *His people*, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever,”—even that “new Jerusalem,” “the holy city,” “coming down from God out of heaven.”

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST THE TREASURY OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.—COLLOSSIANS ii. 3.

HERE is a sentence, my brethren, which might well claim to attract the notice of an age, whose prominent characteristic it is to covet “knowledge” under all its forms. We are not apt, with the Jews, “to require a sign;” it has become rather unfashionable to admit the possibility of one; but we assuredly display no small development of that other tendency, with “the Greeks,” to “seek after *wisdom*.” Now this is a tendency of which, as you know, the Scriptures give very opposite accounts. Sometimes “to search for knowledge as for hid treasures” is applauded as the noblest business of man; a labor rewarded by the richest testimonies of divine favor, and involving, as it would seem, almost every other excellence within it. At other times, to search after wisdom is coldly rebuked as the characteristic of the arrogant and dissatisfied caviller, the mark of a heart alienated from the obedience of God, the temper inherited from that unhappy mother who did eat of the tree because she saw it was “a tree to be desired to make one *wise*.” Can the same act be liable to a verdict so opposite, and this a verdict from the very tribunal of infallible truth? Yes, —for it is the same act founded in opposite dispositions and motives; or rather, as these dispositions and motives are themselves the direct objects of the divine perception and judgment, it is *not* the same act, but acts different and oppo-

site, though expressed under the same title from the sameness of outward appearance.

And thus, when in one place, already alluded to, the Apostle has noticed the Grecian solicitude for "wisdom," he adds, by way of contrast, that "we preach *Christ* crucified," who was to these disputants "foolishness," and who was not to be preached "with wisdom of words," lest His "cross should be made of none effect;" while here he speaks of this same Christ as containing within Him all the infinitude of wisdom and of knowledge. The Christ whose Gospel was invested with the simplicity of infancy, was yet, it seems, the fountain of a wisdom deep as eternity; the preaching of His truth was to be, like Himself, at once lowly and divine. It was to be a light which "the darkness comprehendeth not," valued not; and yet a "marvellous light," on which angels shrank as they gazed. "Little children" were to know it, and rejoice in it, and bless it; the sage of eighty winters was to reject it in perplexity, or distrust, or contempt. And as it thus began, so, there was little doubt, thus it was to continue. Through all its earthly fortunes it was to meet an irreconcilable antagonist in that spurious wisdom it deposed. Pride in Adam originally made its revelation necessary; pride in the sons of Adam was to be its everlasting foe. "The foolishness of God" was indeed far "wiser than men;" but to the mass of men it was to be "foolishness" still. The "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" were to be in Christ, but, as the text emphatically has it, they were to be "hid" there.

It appears, so soon was the trail of the serpent again visible in the Paradise of God, that these Colossians, to whom St Paul wrote this sentence, *required* some admonition upon these points. As the first Churches had many advantages over us, so, it is not to be denied, they had some disadvantages too. Visited by Apostles, yet Apostles could not always abide with them; and, in many instances, we may conclude that at this very early period

their regular ministry was but partly filled, and their ecclesiastical organization still imperfect. The Holy Spirit might be active in supplying these deficiencies; but the laws of spiritual agency are mysterious; and we know not how often the moral failures of Churches may have, in anger, suspended these preternatural blessings. Nor had they always the ready and easy appeal to written documents, containing the plan and substance of the faith, which we possess. And thus, though in all the main features of the truth it is wholly beyond doubt they kept the faith, and in their creeds transmitted it,—creeds which all resemble, and bespeak a common and sacred origin,—though, in the great outlines of doctrine and discipline, they are, as they advanced to their full development, the acknowledged model of our own Church, and worthy to be so, and though heresy, at worst, could be but temporary and occasional, resisted as it ordinarily was by the indignant denunciation of the local authorities, or of the Church at large,—yet the vigor which could suppress heresy could not always prevent its entrance. “We have entered into the labors” of these blessed communities; we possess the faith they kept, we possess the ministry they transmitted; but, while we thus enjoy the results, we cannot know the conflict they often endured to preserve to us this precious inheritance.

It is certain that, in many matters affecting the new religion, tempting opportunities were afforded to ambitious teachers for perverting inexperienced minds; and it is a melancholy fact that there are few of the Pauline epistles that do not intimate, in his Apostolic absences, intrusions of the errors he had discountenanced, unauthorized teachings, and personal dissensions. The particular errors which he rebukes may, like their unhappy authors, have disappeared; having no root in the common mass and deposit of the faith, they may have decayed and dropped from the tree they incumbered, and left to us the simple proportions

of the truth of Christ: but we know too well that the spirit which originated these devices has not vanished. It has assumed new forms suitable to a new scene of action. The Church of Christ, though promised an existence immortal, is also promised an existence of conflict; it must live, but only by fighting for life; and, surely, this age of ours does not seem likely to disappoint the prediction, or to leave the servants of the living God without an adversary to meet and to resist.

Now the one point in which these pretended enlighteners of the Christian community, in St Paul's day, all agreed, which formed the badge of their calling, their pride and boast, was, we can collect, the profession of "wisdom." This was the ground on which they challenged universal attention, and in comparison with which they depreciated the apostolic teaching as cold and unsatisfactory. We can gather this from the very letter before us. The Apostle had previously prayed that they "might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom," and declared that he "preached Christ, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom;" and in the words that follow the text we discover the reason of these forms of phrase. "This, I say," he adds to his proclamation of the wisdom to be found in Christ, "*lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*" "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," by seducing your simplicity into tenets and practices "*which have a show of wisdom.*" The object of these perpetual references to the attainment of "wisdom and knowledge" cannot, then, be mistaken. Pretences were abroad in this little society, which it was necessary to denounce and counteract. The sages of this Colossian congregation thought they could not confer a greater blessing on society, than by suiting to the spirit of the age a revelation somewhat too rude for men of reflection and experience. The gold of heaven's own sanctuary might be advantageously refined, as they thought. It was

God Himself had come from heaven with His restorative, but these instructors thought that perhaps the remedy might be made yet more effective by a little earthly qualification. Now, as far as we can collect from the record before us, these improvements seem to have been of two kinds. I name them, because they distinctly mark the two principal paths, by which the wisdom of this world has ever proceeded in corrupting, or in practically superseding, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as originally held, preached, and transmitted by His Church. The most active of these teachers (if we may conjecture the degree of their mischievous activity by the space the Apostle devotes to them) inclined to *superstitious additions*,—to a religion more diversified, romantic, and minute, than the Gospel supplied,—to the worship of angels, to the ritual observances of the Jews (chap. ii. 16—18, &c.) But something of a different kind is probably meant, when the Apostle warns his children against those “enticing words,” that “philosophy and vain deceit,” with which their inexperience was, or would be, assailed. Here we discover the effort, not so much to multiply the observances of religion, as to refine all religion into a dreamy mysticism, or (for the *same* root of bitterness has a new offshoot for every age) into whatever other way of thought characterized the prevailing speculation of the day. What was *then* a cold, unpractical mysticism would now be as cold and heartless a devotion to what worldly men call the “substantial goods” of life. But the enlighteners of that day, and the enlighteners of this are brethren. Both alike would sacrifice to the received wisdom of the time, that “everlasting Gospel” which is of no time, or rather of all times, because it addresses itself to a nature unchanged in its wants and its weakness from the hour of the Fall to the hour of “the new heaven and the new earth.”

It is, then, against such delusive idols as these, whether substitutions for the truth or corruptions of it, that our

Apostle, in this memorable passage, erects the banner of the cross, the preaching and teaching of that simple but all-sufficing Gospel, which he was commissioned to declare; beyond which (in his own expressive phrase) he “determined to know nothing,” and in comparison with whose “excellency of knowledge,” he had learned to count all as loss and refuse. It is the same cause in which I have to animate you; for the time demands these warnings. The supremacy of this truth is again virtually disclaimed, its paramount authority again questioned. The position and claims of the faith of Christ to stand as the fundamental element in national advancement,—the claims of the Church of Christ, the witness and depositary of that faith, to be recognized as the nation’s organ of moral education,—if, as I rejoice to think, they are received and appreciated by a growing number among us, are still but too faintly felt by many. The truth, which had once to contend, against an over-fond and superstitious devotion, has now to contend, with equal anxiety, against a cold and carnal selfishness. Men *have* again learned to think that this sacred deposit, this awful representative of God in the world, may, without a crime, be left for superstition to corrode, or infidelity to neglect; that this truth, for which Christ died, is, after all, but an incidental adjunct to the formation of the mind of a people; that they, to whom God has given the fearful responsibility of dispensing truth or falsehood among millions, may abandon all effort to secure the publication of God’s message among a dark and godless population. It is not with the ignorant and thoughtless we have to deal, when we undertake as Christ’s commissioned servants, to repel these infatuations. These are too often the theories of gifted statesmen and laborious thinkers; of men who profess to be the guides of their brethren, the vanguard of their country’s intellect. It is these, “the wise and prudent,” who cannot discover either “wisdom or knowledge” in the mystery of Christ. Nay, these are even

the most liable to the delusion! The dream of modern sophistry, that any education can be of real value, in a world like ours, which is not based upon definite convictions as to the world beyond it; that trial and temptation can be met and resisted out of the armory of this world's weak and shadowy motives, however vain the dream be, will naturally perhaps be most cherished by those, whose station has allowed them to refine their minds by earthly speculation, and who keenly relish its charms. Or whence else is it, that so large a portion of the influence, and property, and even virtue of these lands, can look abroad over the myriads of souls that God has virtually set in their charge through the extent of these countries, and profess to believe them created for eternity, and that *life* eternal is only "to know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent," and yet can, without a struggle, resign this high and holy conflict for the truth, to which they are by authority of station summoned? Do I exaggerate when I speak of men, and that no small or unimportant class, among whom the maxim has taken its place as authentic truth, that falsehood may be rightfully established, encouraged, and endowed, wherever a sufficient number of votaries are found to demand it; that in religion, though in nothing else, what each man *thinks* true is truth to him, and invested with all the claims and attributes that belong to the very message bequeathed by Him who was "*the truth and the life.*" Alas! these are the approved axioms of our modern systems of moral training; of "wisdom and knowledge" they speak loudly, but little and vaguely of Him, in whom "*their treasures are hid.*"

Against these perversions, I repeat,—against these, which are but modern forms of that old Colossian spirit, that strove to be wiser than the wisdom of God; against these theories of national illumination, which mask indolence and indifference in the guise of charitable liberality; against these it is your duty to be prepared to bear a prompt and

willing testimony, and, where the means have been organized, as among you,¹ to make that testimony practically available for your poorer brethren in Jesus Christ. To whatever class the adversaries of Christian education belong, whichever section of the Colossian schismatics they reflect, be prepared, in a deep and intelligent appreciation of the Gospel of Christ, to cherish the inestimable bequest, and to discountenance every pretext for superseding it, however plausible. You may do much to rectify the public mind upon the great question of a general education for the entire people of our country; but, however you resolve *that* problem, no doubt can cloud, no delay should be suffered to impede, your solicitude to fulfil your duty to the poorer members of your own body. It is their privilege that the light of the Gospel is as free to them as the light of the day; nothing, then, remains to prevent *their* education from being eminently the education of Christian disciples, but the backwardness of their wealthier brethren. Shame would it be if, in any district of our land, this backwardness were evinced, at such a crisis and such a call! I cannot give you dispositions, I can only give you reasons. I cannot make you joyful in the truth of Christ, or resolute to support and spread it; these graces are in the gift of God alone; but I *can* tell you, with my inspired author, of the glory of this truth, of its pervading power, and its boundless extent; how it is a very and literal certainty, that “in it are hidden all the treasures of wisdom,” for that, varied as are the departments of human thought, this knowledge of the mystery of God in Christ embraces all, and fills all, and vivifies all, and exalts all. This is what makes *it* paramount in education, and *us* urgent in pressing it; *this* alone makes us “partakers of the divine nature:” all education without it leaves man the animal it found him! We uphold the fortunes of the human race, when we demand the

¹ Preached in the parish-church of Leeds.

Gospel for our children; it is the true civilizer, this revelation of Jesus. Apart from it, what is ordinary civilization, but a variety of corruption and maturer sagacity in evil? Apart from it, what is human science? But let the Apostle's own reasonings reply to *that* question, for on it his words directly turn. Bear with me for a moment farther, then, if you would estimate the predominant position of Christian instruction in relation to all that rivals it; if you would be supporters of Gospel education from fixed and clear conviction.

When the Apostle spoke of the wisdom hid in Christ, he meant by "wisdom" just what his adversaries meant, that is, the knowledge of man in those sublime relations that connect him with God and God's universal plan. Now this is a sort of knowledge, to which *everything* may be expected to contribute some remote and faint light; but the point here to be observed is, that the Revelation of Christ Jesus, alone and unaided, flashes a beam of splendor upon it, in which all others are lost and disappear. Nor this only, but as all knowledge is mainly valuable as it helps our efforts for this last and mightiest knowledge of ourselves and God, so when *this* is attained, through virtue of the Christian truth, it, in its turn, radiates back, upon all the departments of knowledge, a new and blessed light. And thus the Revelation of Christ not merely teaches us, in itself, a series of truths of inexpressible importance, and without it wholly unattainable, but it also, as a great central discovery, harmonizes all our beliefs, sacred and secular, binds them together as its own servants, gives them a new interest, and position, and coloring, and dignifies the pursuit of them as a labor in the very cause of God Himself,—begun and prosecuted with a view to His glory,—for to know the beauty of the temple is to know the glory of the architect. And hence, so far are we who advocate the Revelation of Christ as the basis of education, from (as our slanderers have it) restricting or dreading the free

search of natural knowledge, that, on the contrary, when once the corner-stone has been fixed in our foundation, we exult in a science and a philosophy that is subservient to the faith of Christ; we hail every bright discovery as a new tribute to the creating and redeeming God whom we adore. Let but the Son of Righteousness reign in the centre of the soul, and we know that every element of inferior knowledge will dispose itself to revolve harmoniously around it!

Here, then, you can catch (in a large and general sense) the Apostle's meaning, when he said that "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" were laid up in the faith of Christ. He meant that all true wisdom centred in this faith, and that all else was wise or wisdom-giving, only as this faith pervaded, and brightened, and hallowed it.

But draw nearer yet to the subject. What are the objects of all human inquiry? Man investigates nature; man investigates himself; man rises from both to the Author of both, and inquires the nature and attributes of God. Confine him to each of these, as matter of *direct* experimental inquiry and observation, and see what progress he will make towards that wisdom, which tells him his duties and his destinies. I speak of the mass of mankind, of the average man; for it is with *such* our educational measures have to deal.

Place your pupil, then, in front of the vast edifice of nature. Bid him enter its doors and survey its chambers; it is the glory of our age that he is enabled to such extent to do so. Show him the marvels of the structure, teach him how to classify all the varieties of this wonderful museum; but show him, teach him nothing more. Can it be questioned that the conclusion will forcibly strike him, that so much design must have a designer; that a care so constant betokens a presiding Providence; that if such a Being exist, he is, doubtless, one to whom subjection is rightfully due? Can it be questioned? Brethren! it

can be questioned, and that in no petulant spirit, but in melancholy conviction. These conclusions are to us so elementary and perpetual,—the Church herself, nay, the everlasting traditions of human reason, so constantly impress them,—that we forget they were never *our own* conclusions, however evident when proposed. But suppose I grant that an average mind (and that too upon average attainments in the science of nature) will, without assistance, make these deductions, will yet their light be clear enough, their force strong enough, to form *permanent principles* of action? Let the experience of all ages, nations, and tongues answer the question. And, then, above all, *what is it* your deductions have established? The being, the power, and the skill of God. Convictions awful indeed, but cold and repelling! Convictions that never yet won the *heart* of man; and yet the heart is the sole empire in which God will condescend to reign. Do I, then, affirm that we cannot discover the *goodness* also of the Supreme in His work of creation? Nay, I profess to thank Him for our “creation, preservation, and all the blessings of *this* life;” but I rise beyond them to “the means of grace and the hope of glory,” because I feel *these* to be indeed the sources of a gratitude which earthly changes, however sudden or afflictive, cannot take away; and I rejoice in the consoling thought, because I well know that the vexing bitternesses of this life are (to our imperfect nature) powerful enough to crush too often our best efforts at gratitude, were we dependent on the light of nature alone for our grounds of love. A single finger held near the eye will hide half the heavens; a single misfortune near the heart will hide all the earthly evidences of divine beneficence. But a God made known in *Christ crucified*,—give us, O heavenly Spirit! but a firm faith in this, and no earthly visitation can shake our confidence in His love! Afflictions may, for a moment, cloud our apprehensions of the divine mercy, but there is an evidence in that one awful

fact, the God condemned for man,—that must triumph over every temporary obscuration, re-assume its placid empire in the soul, and restore the trembling Christian to his Lord again.

But come, bring your pupil, your Gospel-deprived pupil, from the outward to the *inward* world; set him to explore his own heart, and to find his duties and his hopes there! Unfold to him all the variety of his powers and his affections; show him the just prerogatives of his reason, the due subjection of the inferior nature. Much will you have done, and yet little! Much will you have furnished to perplex, but no light at all towards a solution! A nature so sublime, so debased,—with such occasional perceptions of good, such perpetual tendencies to evil,—how shall he know whither to turn in this chaos? Above all, how shall he know the right, when there is that within him which perpetually urges him to love the wrong? Can the judgment be trusted when the passions are ever ready to betray it? What *is* the reason of most men but a special pleader to the passions, a hired advocate ready to justify whatever they have predetermined? A fixed standard, independent of these variations, we must have; that standard is, and is only, in the Gospel of Jesus! You would tell your pupil why man is evil, and yet the mysterious child of eternal hopes? Cast aside your pompous pretences of an education independent of the Gospel; place before the immortal being for whom you are prescribing, a page of the story of Paradise for the one, the death and victory over Death, of the Saviour, for the other; and one lesson will have taught him more than years of ineffective inquiry.

We have searched *nature*; we find her dumb until the Gospel of Christ give her a mouth and utterance: we have sought this hidden wisdom in the *heart* of man, and found no response, or none worth a pause, till the same Gospel tells us the history of that heart, its fall and its restoration: shall we now direct our unspellled pupil to dream of *God*,

and find his "wisdom" in his dreams? But I refrain from even the supposition. A voice beyond man bids me resign the theme, an oracle from the sanctuary that supersedes all discussion. "Jesus saith, *I am the way . . . No man cometh to the Father but by me.*" "No man hath *seen God* at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." This suffices. You may demonstrate a First Cause, and call Him, if you please, the Monarch of the Universe; but the knowledge of God, as God is, is in Christ alone. And amid all the boasts of an arrogant age, amid its pretences to penetrate unauthorized into the very courts of God, it is still our blessed belief, the spring and support of our exertions, that "God who commanded the light to shine out of *darkness*, hath shined in our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in *the face of Jesus Christ!*" There alone we profess to find it; there alone we would bid those, who ask us the way to God, to seek it and be happy.

SERMON XVIII.

THE DIVINITY OF OUR PRIEST, PROPHET, AND KING.

(Preached on Trinity Sunday, before the University of Dublin.)

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.—2 CORINTHIANS v. 19.

THE Christian Church, by immemorial usage, and on the justest principles, appropriating distinct days to the special consideration of each of the leading elements of our belief, invites us, upon this occasion, to reflect upon the loftiest of them all,—upon a doctrine which (as if to force upon us the immeasurable advantages of Revelation, as distinguished from the intimations of the natural faculties) is at once placed beyond the discovery, perhaps even beyond the conjectures, of Reason, and, at the same time, when once known, becomes discernibly the central point of our whole system of religious beliefs, around which the rest group themselves in natural arrangement, and deprived of which they seem to lose their presiding principle, their collective symmetry, and their relative order. Happy would it be, if, on an occasion such as this, it were permitted us, forgetting all the cavils which the fevered restlessness of a too ambitious ignorance has perpetually raised against the mysteries of God, to resign ourselves wholly to the feelings which the simple reception of the truth brings with it; and as we reflect, to know by the same testimony of inward consciousness, that they are deceived, who tell us that this is a doctrine which, even if conceded to be

true, is barren of practical fruit, isolated from the Christian life and experience. Of a truth, they who dwell in the light of this belief, when they drop into the dead world of common life, *might* well be as men whose upward eyes have been too dazzled with the brightness of the heavens to discern the objects and relations of earth. Such elevation is in itself high and holy; but let us remember that there are few or *no* merely contemplative abstractions among the truths which God has thought fit to reveal to His Church. The speculative doctrine is, in this instance, met by a practical counterpart, mysterious indeed as itself, yet of deep and daily interest to every regenerate soul. As that Godhead, which was substantially one with the Father and the Spirit, hath entered into fellowship with the human nature, so are we invited to a corresponding fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These are the two terms,—and the necessary terms,—of the mystic intercourse of heaven and earth. This is the inheritance, sealed to every believing soul, that in it should abide these three mysterious agents; and that in our union specially with the Son, as in His specially with us, should be virtually involved the union with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Thus are we, through that blending of the human and divine in Christ (and even natural reason in its calmer hours might apprehend that thence only could the wondrous object be effected), introduced into the very presence of Deity in all its aspects; incorporated, as it were, with the Godhead; “partakers,” in the Apostle’s language, “of the divine nature; and immortalized hereafter in glory by that eternal essence thus mystically united to our own.

The assumption of humanity by the divine Substance in its second Person, is, then, the fact or doctrine which makes the remoter mystery of the Trinity of practical importance to us; and on *this* subject specially I shall endeavor, this morning, to fix your attention. The general question of the Trinity divides into the characters of divin-

ity and of personality, as attributable to each of the three Persons. With respect to the Father, *both* divinity and personality are conceded by all who profess to call on His adorable name. As regards the Son and the Spirit, the case is reciprocally reversed. Of the Son of God (as manifestly one with the "Son of Man") the personality is granted, and the divinity denied; of the Holy Spirit, on the contrary, the divinity is usually, in some sense, granted (when He is considered as an attribute or influence of God), and the distinct personality refused. I may, perhaps, conclude that many of the topics that concern the *latter* question were, either directly or indirectly, brought before you on the last Sunday; and this exclusion, with the admission, already stated, of the divinity and personality of the Father, leaves, as my more immediate subject, the union of a true and perfect deity with the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will attempt, on this occasion, to evince that there is, apart from all *direct scriptural affirmations* of the divinity of Christ, an antecedent probability, and an internal evidence, of the reality of that fact, derivable from the declared purposes of His coming, and the nature of His religion,—amounting nearly, if not altogether, to absolute moral certainty. The subject is of such extent, that within the brief compass of a single discourse I can only offer a few, and, perhaps, not the most effective, out of many topics; selecting rather such as can be easily and compendiously expressed, than such as are in themselves most convincing; and aware that, even in them, I shall with difficulty escape the imputation of obscurity.

There are two characters in Christ, which, as they are both in different senses *divine*, it is proper to request, at least, my younger hearers carefully to distinguish. On the one hand is the essential divinity of the eternal Son of God; on the other, the Spirit of God actuating His humanity. It was by this latter agency that the Christ, or

Anointed One, was duly inaugurated to all His mediatorial offices; and we find it perpetually present with Him, and influential during his whole earthly career. God "gave not the Spirit by measure to Him;" and it is in these spiritual influences that His Church, or body, is said to share, we "receiving of His fulness," and "grace for grace," that is, a grace corresponding in its own degree to every grace in Him; the *mission* of this Spirit to those who believe on Him, being, however, an exercise of power itself, doubtless, divine.

Now this Spirit which, miraculously accomplishing the Incarnation of the Son of God, dwelt in Him, and constituted Him the Christ, is declared by type, prediction, and our Lord's assertions, to have qualified Him for three principal offices,—the priestly, the prophetic, and the regal. Daniel prophesies the "*anointing* of the Most Holy," who was to be "*cut off, not for himself;*" and David, "*the Priest* after" the eternal "*order;*" Christ Himself applies the prediction that "the Spirit hath anointed Him *to preach;*" and the second Psalm declares Him "*the King*" set by God upon His holy hill of Zion. These functions make up the mediatorial character, as far as it is given to us to understand it; and in the exercise of these he was unquestionably human. My object is to show, that He *could not* have been competent to any one of them, unless *deity* was, in the most absolute and literal reality, combined with the inferior nature, in the single person of the Mediator between God and man.

The text states that "God was in Christ, *reconciling the world to Himself;*" and our first consideration shall dwell on Him in His character of reconciling priest. The argument I shall now submit has, since I was first capable of contemplating such subjects impressed my own mind with an evidence which I cannot call less than demonstrative.

It is, indeed, disputed how far moral subjects are properly susceptible of *demonstration*. But if demonstration

consist in evolving from previous suppositions all which these suppositions contain, there is no valid reason why it should not be applicable to these notions; for these notions unquestionably *do* involve relations admitted by all unprejudiced minds the instant they are expressed; and I have little doubt the admission would be universal, if the ideas in question could be detained in steady clearness before the judging faculty, pure from the corrupting influences of habit and of prejudice. The *facility* of obtaining the idea, thus pure from foreign and adulterated admixture, is the great advantage of the *ordinary* demonstrative sciences, but does not constitute them exclusively demonstrative. And, however we may determine about other departments of moral inquiry, this seems evident in all speculations concerning *the just or obligatory*, in which reason takes the whole matter into her own hands independent of all inductions from fact; or, if she does descend into the world of fact, descends there only to apply authoritatively her own pre-established formulas.

If in our moral deductions concerning *earthly* relations, we can attain this determinate conviction, still more forcibly may it be anticipated, when we transfer our meditations to the divine attributes. For here, passing into the very sphere of the Infinite itself, all qualifications, limitations, and allowances cease. Here, bare abstract excellence is realized and in action; and therefore here, if anywhere, we may confidently rely upon the deductions of the moral reason, certain that they cannot but be carried out in the events of the divine administration, even though we see not how.

From a common confusion of ideas, an objection may here be anticipated, appearing in some such shape as this, "that we have no right to apply our poor faculties to pronounce on things regarding God." To such an objection, first, if it imply that we can know *nothing* of the moral character of God apart from revelation, it may be sufficient

to oppose the express denial of revelation itself; or to evince (which might be easily done) that this supposition would make the very words of the revelation unintelligible,—those words which involve moral notions, which suppose a moral capacity, which capacity proclaims the character of God; or, finally, to waive the examination of the objection altogether, and, whatever becomes of *it*, to recur to the full testimony of revelation, which declares that God *is* infinitely just, and wise, and good, understanding by this *infinity*, that no exception to the absolute universality of these attributes in God, except whatever may be demanded by their mutual consistency, ever can, by any possibility, or in any circumstances, occur. But, secondly, if the objector mean that, though we may be certain of God's moral character, we can never pronounce in *what manner it is to be developed*, and, therefore, can never know whether a certain set of facts are demanded by it or not, on account of unknown relations that may reconcile what we cannot reconcile,—I answer, that, however applicable the principle, as a general one, may be, we have, in the case now before me, clear and ample intimations that the reconciliation is effected, *within the limits of the facts*, by them, and by no others whatsoever.

Now, God being, in the sense before explained, infinitely just and loving, the problem, on the creation of a free being capable of transgression and transgressing, was, the conciliation of both; and to the fact of this *object* in the eternal counsels Scripture bears constant testimony, were it only in the perpetual use of legal terms of condemnation and acquittal in the statement of our condition before God, Who is declared to make it the great aim of His work in Christ, that He might be “just and yet the justifier.” That this conciliation is naturally necessary, that sin deserves punishment and must receive it, and that the office of perfect love in the divine being can never be to hinder or eclipse the activity of equally perfect justice, is, indeed, questioned by

those with whom we have to do. Accustomed to that system of compensation and compromise, which our weaknesses oblige in earthly dispensations of retribution, they dare to apply the necessities of our frailty to the omnipotent and omniscient mind. But as there is no limit to the possibility of wilful denial, we can neither concede this point to caprice, nor delay at present among all the fantastic varieties of objection. Whether we regard the *idea of law* as indispensably including sanction, or the *fact of desert as a feeling* of every rational mind, or the express and reiterated declarations of Scripture, the same truth emerges, that the moral legislation of the universe (whose upholder and, as it were, embodiment, is God) inevitably connects sin and punishment. To escape the conviction, we can but recur to that universal scepticism, which denies *this* to be certain, in denying *anything* to be certain that respects the moral character or government of God.

The demand of each individual conscience is, that the punishment be undergone by the criminal. This demand of the natural reason *continues*, and, in continuing, teaches the value and the mercy of the pardon. But it by no means renders *transference* of punishment impossible or inconsistent; the possibility of the vicarious transference depending, not on our sense of desert, but on the secret connection between guilt and pain in the mind of God and the reason of things. If this connection be *absolute and necessary*, transference is impossible; if the final cause of punishment be *preventive*, transference might take place unless a better preventive could be found: if, furthermore, to "magnify the law and make it honorable," punishment may be transferable, unless a mode more effective can be devised, of accomplishing the same purpose in full consistency with God's attribute of justice. But in all possible cases punishment is not superseded, but transferred; for it may be pronounced altogether inconceivable, that the law, distinct as it is, and ever must be, from considerations of compassion, could be

satisfied without a penalty in some place, at some time, in some manner, undergone.

Arrived at this point, I open the page of revelation. I there find all my gloomy anticipations verified. I find this volume (and it alone) evermore represent God as the immediate governor of man, and exacting, with rigorous justice, the service of body and soul. I find, so important was the impression of this relation between God and man, that many hundred years of the history of mankind were devoted to *acting it* over in one district of the world, to exhibiting, in colors not to be mistaken, God's demands and man's inability to fulfil them. I find this long and wondrous history, from Moses downwards, declared by an inspired interpreter to have been intended as a preparatory exhibition of truths universal as the human heart; perpetual requirements on the one hand, perpetual incompetence on the other; and the necessity of a provision for the conciliation of both. That terrible alliance of sin and punishment, which natural justice had already proclaimed, I find everywhere assumed or asserted; but I find more than this. That transference of punishment, which I had only dared to hope for, is repeatedly, forcibly, explicitly declared; and a *mysterious Being*, whom the coldest and most cursory inspection cannot deny to be invested with attributes of extraordinary dignity,—a Being of whom, before, and during, and after His appearance among us, language is used which, detached from the context, no one familiar with the jealous caution of Scripture phrasology could hesitate to believe applied only to supreme Deity,—such a Being as this is revealed as the voluntary subject of the vengeance of offended law.

I return to the determinations of reason once more, and I ask of her, what was the nature, and what the dignity, of the Being who undertook and who accomplished such an office as this? If he, indeed, appeared upon the stage of the world to solve, in His own person, the problem of justice

made consistent with pardon, what must have been the position, in relation to the law itself, of the Being who could triumphantly effect it; who could, at the same moment, add new glories to the moral legislation of God, and win a title to the skies for the ruined race that had violated, disgraced, and contemned it?

I affirm that reason replies, that every scheme, which does not suppose the Being who suffered actually indetical with the Being whose justice demanded the sacrifice, and whom we call by the holy name of *God*, defeats the notion of satisfaction, and not only leaves the attributes of infinite justice and infinite love unreconciled, but does manifestly violate them both.

To state the case in the briefest form:—such a Being must have been greater than God, or equal with God, or inferior to God, or, finally, God Himself.

The two first suppositions need not detain us. They are easily shown to be self-contradictory, and will not be maintained by any adversaries with whom the truth of God has to contest. We arrive at the third possible supposition, that which pronounces the law satisfied by the punishment of one *Himself the bounden subject* of the law,—of a law which, in its evangelical promulgation, commands *every man* to be ready to “lay down his life for the brethren.” Now if such be the nature, and such the extent, of the law of God, that all works of supererogation are manifestly impossible, and that of every creature, the lowest not more than the highest, it may with equal truth be said that, after he has done all that he ever did or could perform, whether for himself or *others*, he is still but the performer of his duty,—it seems necessarily to follow that, though we regard the work of Christ under its most exalted aspect, it was, were Christ simply a creature, no more than a realization of that universal law of love under which every created being is bound, and consequently could have no propitiatory influence beyond His own person; in other words,

that *even He* fulfilled but His duty as a creature, when He “did to others as He would they had done for Him.” This argument is equally applicable through every stage of created being unless creation be wider than the sovereignty of its Creator’s law. The propitiatory virtue of Christ’s sacrifice must, therefore, rest altogether upon the dignity of His person, and no dignity can cover the conditions of the question, until we reach *that one Being*, over whom is no superior, and to whom the conception of duty to any object above Himself ceases to be applicable. Our fourth supposition now emerges, and the sacrificing priest of the New Testament is discovered to be ONE with the everlasting God.

As regards the reconciliation of the attributes, the supposition is equally impeachable, which exhibits infinite justice placing the burden of guilt on a being totally distinct from Himself, His inferior, and absolutely innocent; and which exhibits *infinite* love as accepting an infliction of pain, which (unless we question the divine Omnipotence) could manifestly have been prevented by the very disposition of events which the Christian Church receives. And to that infinity of excellence which the great fact itself was professedly meant to display, and to which the least exception is as fatal as the greatest, the defence is totally nugatory, which pleads the *voluntary* nature of the sacrifice as a justification of its acceptance by Him who is substantial love; a doctrine which, while, on the one hand, it *practically* transfers the whole merit of the act, and our whole gratitude for its performance, from God to the man or angel who undertook to be our champion, on the other, leaves that God in the strange and inadmissible position of being outdone by His own creature in the manifestation of His own noblest attribute, at the most critical moment of its exercise, and in a dispensation purposely intended to display it!

Contemplating Christ, then, in His priestly character, these propositions appear to be amply ratified by *reason*;

the propriety of punishment, the possibility of transference, and the internal necessity that the satisfier of the demands of the Law should Himself be one with its Author, its Dispenser, and its Judge. From Christ the Priest, I pass to Christ the Prophet, with the advantage that most of those who deny Him as the Saviour from penalty, will at least consent to admit Him as the legislator and revealer of duty. But in this, no less than the former, I read the indelible characters, and behold the manifest assumption, of deity; and though He had never declared Himself one with the Father, or accepted the unqualified adoration of those who approached Him, or heard without a disclamation the incredulous disciple's confession of His divinity,—I could not contemplate His own position in the Law He gave, without knowing, that none below God could have been the *Prophet* of the New Testament!

The Lord Jesus Christ, as the principal part of His prophetic function, came to *confirm the whole law of God*, by an ampler revelation, a more authoritative commission, a more perfect example, a more impressive evidence. To this part of His office He perpetually refers, with careful caution resisting the notion that He had come to destroy and not to fulfil. If, on the one hand, He declares that heaven and earth should pass away sooner than *His word*, on the other He proclaims that “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of *the Law* to fail;” and thus identifies “His word” and the Law of God, in a common authority and a common perpetuity. And hence He usually preferred to present His own commands, while He continually declared them *His own*, rather as *abstracts* of the more diffuse requisitions of the old law, or as literal *repetitions* of them, than in a form absolutely new. Now, “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” the dispensation of command (the “ministration of condemnation”) was committed to Moses as its messenger; the dispensation of pardon (the “ministration of righteousness”) to Christ. Considered

simply as ambassadors of God, we have, perhaps, no direct reason for establishing a personal superiority of one to the other; in each case alike a man could be originally authorized, a man could speak, a man could be dignified by miraculous attestations. But when we descend into the substance of the two commissions, the equality disappears, and a distinction manifests itself, which not merely elevates the promised "Prophet like unto Moses" *above* Moses, but places Him where no created nature can stand. This personage, who was to witness, and enforce, and be the martyr of the Law, comes forward, at the same moment, and in virtue of the same commission, to suspend its terrors, and to suspend them on what condition? On condition of the possession of a spiritual grace, directed immediately to *Himself*, and terminating in Himself; a grace which is alternately designated as "faith in God" and "faith in Christ," and which, if it sometimes regard Him as messenger, and relate simply to belief in His veracity, assuredly no less frequently regards Him as the final and ultimate object of religious affection. Now consider the state of this case. A being, who declares that the law itself shall stand eternal and immutable, professes to insure acceptance with *God*, without its personal fulfilment by the accepted. He declares, that in the mind of each individual thus accepted, a substituted condition must be realized; a condition which, in itself, has no natural claim to justify, and can derive its justifying quality only from the merciful ordination of God. This condition is such as to rest the whole weight of the mind upon the messenger himself, who, with the voice of a man and a brother, proclaims its sufficiency. Every form of phrase is employed which can evince that in Him the substituted affliction is to find its object, scope, and scene; and that in the balance of the great account, a thorough dependence on Him, infused by the Spirit and living in the life, is to cancel the debt we never could have paid. It is of no moment to the argument to what class we reduce this peculiar grace, whether

it be essentially moral or purely instrumental. I only demand what Scripture confirms, that it is declared, in terms equally absolute, to centre in Christ as to centre in God. Who, then, is this Being, that thus transfers the rights of God to Himself? Who is He that boldly annuls the harmonies of the moral universe, and makes the tendency to Him equivalent to the tendency to God? Who is this new "*Sun of Righteousness*," that identifies, in their effects on the eternal state, the attraction of faith to himself as a centre, and the attraction of unsinning obedience to God as a centre? I can find no solution for the question, till I find the objects identical; until I recognize in Him, who fixed on Himself man's grasp of faith, the same everlasting God, who of old fixed on Himself man's obligation of obedience. *Then* can I see the force of that comparison of St Paul between the two prophets of the Law and Gospel, which occupies the opening of his third chapter to the Hebrews; when he states that Moses was "the servant," but Christ "the *builder* of the house," and "the Son over *his own* house." *Himself* the architect and orderer of the great structure of righteousness, He alone could descend into His own mansion, and "at the counsel of His will," arrange its temporary disorders. As the giver and witness of the Law, yea, the very essence of righteousness in His own person, He could, on the one hand, maintain *it* inviolate, on the other, alter His terms of acceptance, from sinless obedience to *Himself*, to faith dependent on *Himself*. But what an "order" would that have been, which, leaving, as we have already seen, the Law unsatisfied, should have compensated disobedience to God by the worse crime of unreserved reliance on a creature? Or what should we have thought if *Moses*, "the servant in the house," had come forth with a similar proposal, and dared to pronounce *himself*, his human and created self, the object on which the despairing heart of man was to rest, and, in so

resting, feel itself liberated from the curse of moral guilt, an in union with the uncreated God!

My opportunity of detaining your attention is at present too brief to carry this point into any further development. I pass without delay to the third, the kingly office of the Messiah; and in the Being, who was anointed to *this* office by the Spirit of God, I seem to detect the necessary presence of the element of divinity, even *more* prominent and obvious, though not more certain, than in either of the former of His mediatorial functions.

When the prophet Zechariah, in his wondrous thirteenth chapter, publishes the character of the evangelical times, after that he has spoken of the "fountain for sin," to be "opened to the house of David," he specifies as one important result of the diffusion of the Gospel, that "*idols*" should cease "out of the land." This promise has been partially, and, in proportion to the success of the pure Gospel of Christ, will, of course, be more and more completely, fulfilled. The evil exists in direct antagonism to Christianity, and necessarily falls as *it* rises. Now, in the sense which the Scriptures often *expressly* ascribe to idolatry, and in the sense everywhere demanded by their purport and spirit, all withdrawal of the spiritual affections from God to any other being is denounced as equivalent, in moral criminality, to the coarser guilt of the worshippers of wood and stone. It is, therefore, of the essence of Christianity, that blessed revelation whose purpose is to unite us now and for ever with our God,—that it should propose Him, and Him alone, as the one final object of the affections of man.

Now let us, for a moment, contemplate the prominent object in the foreground of Scripture prediction and Scripture history. Alike in ancient prophecy, in direct personal claim, in apostolic description, and in the yet loftier portraitures of the future world, a Being is found to move through the Bible, invested with characters of dignity

beyond which no higher exaltation is conceivable by man. To this Being a power is by His own hallowed lips declared to be "committed," which embraces all things in heaven and in earth; and no doubtful intimations apprise us that the recognition of His authority extends far beyond this world and its inhabitants. A prophet, who is subsequently interpreted by a prophet, represents Him as surrounded by the adoring hosts of heaven, who veil their faces in presence of His surpassing lustre; and the last book of divine prediction discloses the same transcendent abode, not merely as evermore resounding His praises, but even as owing to the very light that fills and beautifies it to *Him*. And if it be true of the sinless heaven, that "the Lamb is the light thereof," no marvel that He should be designated as "the light of *this* world;" or that, from every department of our lower creation, a tribute should be levied to celebrate *His* praise, who is declared to be the one that "filleteth all in all." Accordingly, with direct reference to His mediatorial and assumed royalty (of which alone I speak here), names and titles are sought for Him which assuredly leave nothing but the Godhead itself beyond them; titles which, after exhausting every form of unqualified pre-eminence, at length rise to designating Him "Prince of the kings of the earth," "Lord of lords and King of kings." That this regal state was *given* to Christ, and given on account of His participation in the human nature, is unquestionable, for Christ Himself amply attests it. "The Father hath *given* Him authority to execute judgment, *because* He is the Son of man." But, consistently with the principle just laid down, I now ask, could this dignity and its appendages have ever been consigned to any being not essentially divine?

Religion being mainly a practical matter, our true devotion is not where our words, but where our hearts place it. I have already said that this principle is abundantly testified by revelation; I now add, that it is so obvious to rea-

son as to need no detailed proof. That which is the final object of the thoughts and affections, is to every man practically his God. Now the aim of the revelation of God's will being (as all admit) to direct the heart to *Him*, the object most prominent in revelation will unquestionably be that God himself; and on *Him* alone, with scrupulous jealousy, will the entire devotion of the soul be centred. If *earthly* power be recognized as venerable, it will be venerable only, or chiefly, as "ordained of God;" and the same oracle that bids us render unto the earthly monarch (and, by parity of reason, to the highest conceivable created power) "the things that are his," will be sure to reserve for God "the things that are God's." At all times the ultimate tendency of the soul will be *His* "by whom" alone "kings reign;" the loyalty that guards the throne itself has its limits when it jars with *His*; the body, soul, and spirit are God's, by a right ancient as creation, with which nothing can interfere, and nothing participate.

Now, it is perfectly certain that the same divine Being, who thus, by the voice of *His* Scriptures, demands our whole wealth of affections, has also, in the very same Scriptures, exhibited to us a personage, distinct from the simple and unmingled Godhead, who makes, and is everywhere countenanced in making, the *very same demand*. We find that God's dispensation, appointing in its wisdom a "Lord of lords" over the earth, has been such, that the highest conceivable attributes of supremacy are combined in this Being, so as to demand our absolute submission as *a right*. We find that our whole spiritual life and eternal fortunes are suspended upon *Him* who "quickeneth whom He will," so as to demand it as our *interest*. We find that every glory imaginable by man, and more than he can ever imagine, is lavished upon this great personage, so as to obtain it from our *admiration*. Yet were this all, we might still, perhaps, by resolute effort, contrive to save a thought for God from *His* too attractive messenger. But this is *not* all! Ties more

potent, more holy still, bind us to the Mediator, and charm us, by the very necessity of our nature, from the cold majesty of a distant and invisible God, and these ties (strange to say !) are found to compose the whole habit of religion ! He redeemed us, and we *love* Him ; He offered us salvation, and we *believe* on Him ; He is to receive us into glory, and we *hope* in Him ; He is our strength and life, and we *rejoice* in Him ; He is proclaimed our “ King,” our “ Head,” the vine in which we are grafted, the foundation on which we are built, and we *adore* Him ! He who framed the human heart, and knows His own work, knows we cannot enter the portals of this “ kingdom” of the Mediator, and not forget all in the monarch who reigns there ! If we are the unwarranted worshippers of a creature, God Himself has raised up his own rival, and unveiled the image to our adoration, and, in investing that image with all the perfections of deity, has betrayed us by our own best emotions. But no ; the monarch of this kingdom is such as, in Himself, to accomplish all and to reconcile all ; the commissioned sovereign and the eternal sovereign are *one*, man incorporated with God ; this “ King on Zion” bears that within Him which can stand the whole weight of our adoration : —we need not dread, in our hours of deepest devotion, in all the prostration of the heart before its Lord, that we are defrauding the God when we worship Him who is also “ the man Christ Jesus.” God has *not* placed between us and Himself a Being who must inevitably arrest the affections, as they struggle to their Creator ; He has *not* condemned us to hover, in unhappy indecision, between the restrictions of the *reason*, forbidding the worship of the creature, and the impulse of the *heart* to see its God in Him, in whom it sees unbounded majesty softened to unbounded love.

We have thus seen (and I have given you but the fragments of a wider argument) that though the Scriptures had never expressly ascribed to Christ absolute and essential deity, as an element in His mediatorial person and capa-

city, the reason, dwelling on the objects, execution, and consequences of His work, might, with no timid voice, affirm that God alone was competent to every office it involved.

To you who now have beheld, in the incarnate God, your Priest, your Prophet, and your King, may He give the will and power to adore Him as He deserves! This, which is a theme of grace and peace, is too truly a theme of terror too. Christ the divine Saviour is one with Christ the divine Judge; nor is there any consideration more appalling to conscious guilt and conscious neglect than this, that it is none other than the Shepherd who yielded life itself for the sheep, that is yet to sit in judgment, on that day when mercy once more shall disappear into the depths of the divine essence, and justice alone be visible upon the throne of God! Had there been one effort unmade, one instance of love unexemplified, one form or shape of mercy untried to save us, we might have a hope to bend the Sovereign Judge to pity; we might plead that every chance had not yet been exhausted, and trust our misery might move Him to respite the evil day, till the one omitted remedy were tried! But the Judge comes into court with all the insignia of agony and sacrifice! He has already proved to what depths almighty love could go! There is nothing we can propose which He has not already anticipated! The treasury of heaven is exhausted, the possibilities of mercy are run out! Pondering these things, let us work while it is yet day, "for the night cometh when no man can work." So shall that "night" be to us but the dawning of a better day; and we who have trusted in Him as our Priest, and followed Him as our Prophet, shall glory in Him as our *King*, when that brightest manifestation of His power shall arrive, which inspired lips have termed "the glorious appearing of our great *God and Saviour*, Jesus Christ!"

SERMON XIX.

THE EXPEDIENCY OF CHRIST'S INVISIBILITY.

(Preached before the University of Dublin.)

It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.—JOHN xvi. 7.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ sets before us, in these words, one of the great mysteries of His government. You are all familiar with the context. It was the night of the betrayal, He that had “received the sop” had already gone out, to the last an hypocrite; for even then the disciples thought the “See thou do it quickly” to be, not the sufferance of treachery, but the injunction of charity. He had “gone out;” “and it was night,” adds the Evangelist,—night, that faintly imaged the gloom of the traitor’s own perturbed spirit. He had “gone out,” and was already in communication with the murderers, for it was at length “their hour and the power of darkness.” But if there was “thick darkness” that hour “in all the land,” surely “the children of Israel had light in *their* dwelling.” That lonely “upper room” held within it the living “Light of the world,” and, may we not say, held Him at His loveliest hour; or do I err when, in the calm setting of this Sun of Righteousness, I seem to perceive a radiance more tenderly beautiful than it ever diffused before,—a glory we no longer admire with shaded and fearful eyes, but fondly gaze on through unconscious tears? He was subject to all the guiltless laws

of human nature; and we know that grief has a power to call out forms of spiritual beauty more thrilling than its ordinary manifestations. However it be, we seem to see farther into the very heart of Jesus in the mild majesty of that evening's discourse, to discover a depth of divine peace more central, to feel the heavenly element more thoroughly transfused into the earthly, to see Him more truly (in the fashion we are promised to behold Him hereafter) "*as He is.*" Peter, and James, and John, adored an outward change on Thabor; this seems a kind of spiritual transfiguration. It is far from being explained, but it, of course, is felt more deeply, from the contrast of the contemporary incidents. The murderers are already on their way, led by an elect disciple; and He, who saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, *saw* them even as He spoke; and while His words breathe the tranquillity of Paradise, there is only "the brook Cedron" between Him and Gethsemane.

It is one peculiarly touching trait in the sorrows of Jesus, that, to a great degree, He was necessarily *alone* in these sorrows! The poor and illiterate men who heard Him could not yet accompany Him into those abysses of woe which He was treading and to tread. Far from comforting, they could scarcely understand Him. He had to sustain them and Himself; instead of diminishing, they but multiplied his grief. A man will endure much if he feels that his endurance is appreciated; but these men had been taught no philosophic admiration for heroic virtue, they were no refined enthusiasts of the moral sublime. They loved Him, indeed; but it is not the unintelligent affection of instinct or habit that can console in a crisis like this; and events proved how infirm and wavering was even that habitual loyalty. "Ye shall leave me alone." Alas! had He ever been *but* alone?

Themselves helpless, unable then to help, they hang upon their betrayed Master; but He considers not what they can return, but what they need. He predicts their

future sufferings, that these may not come unexpected, and, therefore, more overwhelming; and that the remembrance of the prediction may assure them of the abiding presence of the Divine Predictor. “‘These things have I told you, that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them.’ I did not,” He continues (ver. 4), “fully reveal to you these tidings of trial and trouble from the beginning, ‘because I was with you;’ the new and untried dispensation of my *absence* had not yet commenced, and it was unnecessary to afflict you with intelligence which could have no reference except to *it*. ‘But now’ (vv. 5, 6) ‘I go my way to Him that sent me,’ and ye ask not *whither*, but unthinkingly grieve at my communication. Ye are so occupied with grief for my departure, and those troubles which must oppress you when your protector is no more at hand, that none of you thinks of asking the far more momentous question,—What is the goal, and what the object, of this great journey? ‘Nevertheless I tell you the truth,’ startling as it may at first appear, ‘it is *expedient* for you that I go away;’ advantages shall accrue to you such as you have never yet experienced; knowledge yet unpossessed, languages yet unspoken, miracles mighty as mine own. But to communicate these powers I must no longer be on earth; one world cannot contain us both; the Master must disappear that the disciples may appear in His delegated authority. If I depart not in the flesh I cannot come in the Spirit. The Holy Ghost in mysterious silence awaits the signal of my presence in the courts of heaven, and must await it: ‘If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.’”

This is the special declaration to which I am to call your attention. It affirms (you will observe) not merely that the Holy Spirit was to come, but that, unless Christ departed, He could not come; that the disappearance was the necessary condition of the advent; that a visible Christ and an invisible “Spirit of Christ” were, in the present dispensa-

tion, incompatible. For this law, thus declared, there doubtless are reasons infinitely beyond all capacity of human thought; reasons which to see would be to see some of the darkest secrets of eternity. There may be an impossibility in this case, more insuperable than any law of physical nature. The harmonies of heaven might have been as fatally violated by a contradiction of this ordinance, as those of earth by the sudden suspension of its widest natural laws; and the human intellect, which is unable to grasp the ultimate reasons of Providence, is at least permitted to be assured that those reasons cannot but *exist*. But it is one of the perfections of the Divine legislation, that a multitude of reasons may exist for a single ordinance, that a thousand proprieties may be conciliated and satisfied in a single event, and, therefore, that innumerable intellects, through all the progressive stages of intelligence, may contemplate the same fact in different aspects, deduce from it different results, refer it to different laws, yet *all* pronounce it wise, all unite in the choral song, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God Almighty! just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints!" And thus, even in our limited experience, we may perchance detect one or two of these subordinate fitnesses which, along with vaster and profounder reasons, made it right that Christ should be in the world of glory ere the Paraclete descended into the world of trial, and that, thenceforward, the literal and physical presence of the incarnate Son of God should, during the earthly history of the Church, be superseded by the inward energies of His Omnipotent Spirit. The subject divides itself naturally into three main topics of consideration, with each of which I am to engage you. It directs us to the propriety of the present government of the Church by an *invisible* head; to the intervention of the *Holy Spirit* in carrying on this dispensation of invisible control; and to the disappearance of Christ *as the necessary condition* of the Spirit's descent. My object shall be to assist your minds

in harmonizing these facts with each other, and with the scriptural representations of religion and of man. These three great questions, singly distinct, yet mutually connected, and forming the natural development of the text, shall engage us on this and the two next Sundays; and I am mistaken if they do not lead us to views of the Divine government, new, it may be, to some of us,—consoling and impressive, I would hope, to us all.

And first,—the government of the Church by the invisible, as contrasted with the visible, superintendence of Christ, the uses and purposes of such a dispensation. We know that the declared object of the earthly work of Christ was the creation of *the Church, regarded as catholic* or universal, as no longer restricted to a special race, but in design and capabilities co-extensive with mankind. So prominent is, indeed, this object, that it seems to outshine every other, and to fill the whole horizon of hope. It is the ardent genius of prophecy to strain its powers of supernatural sight to the *remotest* point of possible vision, to merge the means in the end, the coming preparation in the distant completion; and hence we need not be surprised to find that, though the pages of the inspired seers contain many clear intimations of the dread mystery of sorrow by which the great object was to be wrought out, the object itself animates them to yet ampler and more glowing phrase. The diffusion of divine power, a throne unbounded and unquestioned, the “isles waiting for the law,” “judgment brought forth unto victory,” are the chosen subjects of praise and promise; and however the Psalmist might delight to listen to the music of that “*river*, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,” he still more rejoices to see it in its future depth and vastness, as that illimitable *sea*, by whose waters two other prophets have symbolized the spread of the knowledge of the glory of God (Isai. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14). The saddest pictures of the mysterious agony to come insensibly brighten into this before they

pass away. The same song, which begins with those awful syllables, echoed back across a thousand years by the Sufferer of Calvary ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"), and runs through every mood of wretchedness and wrong, closes with the high prediction that "all the ends of the earth shall worship before" God. The most minute and the most mournful of all the sections of prophecy, that begins by speaking of one who was "despised and rejected of men," ends by proclaiming, that "many shall be justified by the knowledge of Him;" that "the many shall be His portion and the mighty His spoil." There is "a stone which the builders rejected," but is to be "the head-stone of the corner." If He is a priest, He is to be "a priest upon His throne." If He "makes reconciliation for iniquity," it is "to bring in an *everlasting* righteousness;" and "*all peoples*, nations, and languages, shall serve Him." Thus, through all the trials they saw the triumph; if they spake of "the sufferings of Christ," they spake also of "the glory that was to follow; nay, the sufferings seem almost lost in the glory, and the intercepting cloud is consumed and irradiated in the orb that rises in the distance behind it! Thus, the establishment of a kingdom universal and eternal, of a Church catholic, whose first stage of development (would God it corresponded more worthily to its transcendent calling!) already exists, is the culminating point of prophecy, is that which the Holy Spirit eminently promised, Himself the great agent in its accomplishment.

Now as this seems fairly deducible from the general tenor of prophecy, it may be lawful to ask, by what instrumentality such a result could be suitably brought about, whether by the immediate visible sovereignty of a living governor, occupying a fixed and definite place on earth, or by the same controlling power, equally operative, but invisibly exerted. A very slight degree of reflection will surely suffice to decide this question. Whatever, in the changes

of the world, or of the Church, or of the nature of Christ's relationship to both, may be intended and suitable for the future,—it appears very manifest that, for the present, the *universality* of the kingdom of Christ is most fittingly realized and secured by the influences of an unseen Ruler, and a purely spiritual energy operating as His gift and representative. To fix and define Christ's position would itself be to *particularize* the character of this universal society; to know that its presiding head was *here*, rather than *there*, would inevitably result in collecting the Church around a single centre, whence its gifts and graces should radiate to all others, becoming (like all radiations) fainter as they spread. Those who stood upon the outer verge of the spiritual monarchy could not feel themselves equally sitting in the sunshine of this living righteousness, with those who literally “beheld the glory of God *in the face* of Christ Jesus.” And can we affirm that such a feeling would be altogether unjustifiable, when we remember in what terms the Scriptures constantly speak of a blessing, peculiar and special, attached to the actual vision of God? But the perfection of the empire of Christ is that, however it may please His mysterious wisdom to distribute His special favors among the ages and climates of the world, its capacities of blessing are equal and uniform in all places and times. We look not to one earthly centre, but gather round a thousand centres, all pointing to one above! The prerogatives of this spiritual constitution are meant to be not accidental but essential, and, therefore, they are not accumulated round any chosen earthly locality, as would be in some degree inevitable, if the Lord of the Church were Himself to assume a fixed position as His own. A property in land, or the appendages of such a property, rise in value as you approach a metropolis; the air and light of heaven, which can be appropriated by none, are equally valuable to all and everywhere. I need not remind you that this very centralization of the Church under a single

visible head, which our Lord seems purposely to have avoided, until the great revolution that shall attend His Second Advent, is precisely the object which the theory of the Papacy attempts to attain.

2. But even supposing this objection obviated, and that our Lord, preferring not to depute His invisible Spirit, had, by whatever means, counteracted these tendencies; suppose that this "light of the world," from an earthly station, could have poured its beams as equably and universally as when fixed in the *heavens*; even in this case we may, perhaps, be able to discern reasons, which make it questionable how far it would be expedient that Christ should thus be *manifested* as the public sovereign of His Church and people.

We know that Christ, being God as well as man, deserved and received adoration during the days of His flesh. In all the instances of this unqualified adoration, however, it is not certain how far we can answer for the *absolute* purity of the motives of all the adorers. The action itself being materially justifiable, it is quite possible, that He whose principle it was, not to "quench the smoking flax," not to reject the weakest beginnings of righteousness, may not always have required an enlightenment critically perfect from His worshippers, may not have hesitated to accept an act of pious submission which, nevertheless, was done in ignorance of the grounds of its own complete propriety. Doubtless they often adored the God, when little beyond the mighty but human prophet, or perhaps the incarnate angel, occupied their minds; the half instinctive worship of strong emotion, of hope, or surprise, or gratitude, rose to an object loftier than itself had contemplated. Permissible at first, and for a while, this, however, could scarcely be perpetuated without danger, for men might worship a God in the *spirit of idolatry*, if they worshipped only the human element of His complex nature. Now this is just the result, which the visible presence of Christ might be

apprehended to produce. Perpetually familiar with the humanity, it is scarcely conceivable that men could fix a steady gaze upon the deity it enshrined; assuredly such a power of abstraction is not within the habits of the *mass* of mankind: and yet it is only under this condition that Christ can be legitimately adored with the unbounded homage of the entire man.

But we may carry the speculation further. It may be doubted whether the nature and quality of the worship itself would not suffer deterioration. St Paul determined to know Christ no longer *after the flesh*; and, without seeking refined significancies for that phrase, we may fairly pronounce that, constituted as man *now* is, his irresistible bias would be to know a visible Christ thus only or thus chiefly. A feeling of loyal attachment to "the Man Christ Jesus,"—laudable, indeed, yet such as man continually displays towards objects that demand and deserve it, without any material results on the general character,—would probably represent the average devotion of the most devoted; and how inferior this is to the spirit, essentially un-earthly, of the religion that befits our pilgrimage, I need not insist under this head. It will, perhaps, appear more distinctly from what follows.

3. The principle of *faith* is the basis, and the condition, of the spiritual life. Now faith is, according to the inspired definition, "the evidence of things not seen;" it is at once the warrant and the conviction of the invisible. The present spiritual life of man, then, is maintained and manifested, by the subsistence within him of a principle which attaches to the unseen; that is to say, it appears to be a fixed law of the spiritual world, necessary in the established order of events, that man should pass a period of existence, during which, by belief, he virtually realizes to his own convictions that better system of things, on which he is subsequently to enter by sensible experience. That we should be unable fully to assign the grounds of such a law,

is plainly no legitimate objection to its reality, unless it can be shown that the same scheme of government, which necessitates faith, necessitates also our knowledge of the reasons of that necessity; not to add, that to suppose us fully cognizant of these reasons would probably be, in a great degree, to contradict the nature of faith itself, that is, to contradict the very fact we are to account for. However, though we may not comprehend the entire propriety of this dispensation, we may strengthen its probability as a fact, by observing how completely it harmonizes with our experience of the plan of Providence in nature. The *child* must pass through a preliminary period of total dependence, taking all upon trust, and through that dependence (and *only* thus) be assisted into the use of all his faculties, as well mental as bodily, until he is at length enabled to retrace, in the self-dependence of matured reason, the very same ground he has travelled blindfold. Every form of discipline,—in a greater or less degree every species of instruction,—proceeds on the same general principle. We believe at first, on the evidence of testimony, that we may afterwards *know* on the evidence of reason. But the case, as regards religious faith, becomes still more palpable (and even its grounds, in some degree, disclosed), if we reflect on the consequences of that faith. It “worketh by love.” Now if there be anything fairly deducible from the revealed accounts of the future destiny of the saved, it is, that this principle of love is to form its element of action and of happiness. Supposing this to be so, it is in the nature of the case probable (not now to allege direct intimations) that this principle must require a previous formation, growth, and discipline, in the present state. Nor, indeed, is it nearly so incredible that a present active affection of divine love should be the germ of a future development, as that organs of sight and hearing should be formed in the unborn infant, which are incapable of any exercise at all, until it emerges into a world altogether new. But if

an existing principle and growth of divine love be required, as the antecedent to its own subsequent existence in another sphere of being, it is manifest that everything is required, which forms the necessary condition of that principle and growth; and if it be *probable* as a fact, and *right* as an ordinance of God, that this love, thus doubly manifested, should not be infused once for all in its *perfection*; if, according to the common law of gradual progress, there must be a true embryo stage of this heavenly principle,—the first manifestation inferior and preparatory to the second;—then is it in the same proportion probable and right, that a stage of *faith* should exist, as the requisite foundation for that preliminary love. But this faith must be mainly directed to Him, who is the appointed medium of communication between God and man; and, being “the substance of the hoped, and the evidence of the unseen,” it supposes Him removed from the sphere of sense during the whole of that dispensation, in which it is the elementary principle of religion. And thus, that nothing may be sudden or abrupt, the *faith* which clings to an absent Saviour is very fitly made the connecting link between the *reality* of this world and the *reality* of the world to come; and the imagination, under the guidance of Reason and Revelation, anticipates, and by anticipating prepares for, the heaven, which the purified senses are yet to apprehend by direct experience.

I trust you do not look upon these considerations as unprofitable subtleties, or as the mere exercise of speculative ingenuity. I assure you I do not mean them as such. What has just now been said of the preparatory formation of that charity which “never faileth,” is equally applicable to every other grace, which can make men “meet for the inheritance of the saints.” Founded all of them upon faith, being all of them diverse manifestations of the life of faith, they all partake of the *introductory* character, which belongs to a dispensation of faith. And with regard to them all, I know nothing more important to remember, than the great

fact which these reasonings imply,—that we are all placed in this preparatory state, under a solemn course of education for immortality,—education in the strictest sense; that we are intrusted with the formation of our own character; that such as we make ourselves, such we must be for ever; and that in our conduct, in our words, in our very inactivity, we are (by the law of our present nature) ceaselessly engaged in constructing *that* nature, which is to be ours for eternity. What unutterable importance does this tremendous charge confer upon the slightest act of daily life! insignificant in itself, it swells to mighty magnitude, when it becomes an element in that accumulation of habits which constitutes the character, and thence an item in an immortal account, and in its consequences absolutely imperishable. Of a truth, life is “the seed-time of eternity,” and every hour, every minute, the seed is sown, which is to re-appear in immortal fruits. “He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad,” declares our Lord, as if not contemplating that there could be a *moment* in which either was not done!

He Himself stands aloof and superintends the work, Himself unseen, because He knows that at present His visible presence would interfere with the completion of the process. Faith, to qualify for glory, must fight at a disadvantage; love must seek its beloved through clouds and darkness, or it could not hereafter know itself for the grace it is; joy must rejoice with trembling, and smile through tears, if it will yet echo the Song of Moses and the Lamb; patience must “have her perfect work.” *He* knows what is essential to fit His people of the dust to be His companions in glory; and though the probationary discipline be at times severe, it is mercy not to interrupt it. His visible manifestation would tend to do so; it would *force* that spiritual vegetation which, to be perfect, must be progressive; it would perplex and unsettle the gradual formation of character; it would (to use a figure intelligible to chemists) disturb the regular *crystallization* of minds slowly

consolidating into the definite form they are to assume for eternity.

4. I do not pause to insist upon various corroborative circumstances, combining to establish the superior expediency of this invisible government, which will probably have occurred to many of you, now that the topic has been so long before your thoughts. For instance, we cannot overlook the difficulty of *finding a place* for such a being, in a world constituted in all respects, or in almost any respect, as ours is; and if we follow the inquiry more closely, we shall probably perceive, that such a place could not be conceived without altering the elements of our calculation, the position of the world and of the Church, to such a degree as to make it no longer the same question. Whether He appear in triumph or in affliction, this world's society can offer no befitting home for Jesus; it is not yet purified into meetness for such a presence; it *could* not be without changes too chimerical to expect under a probationary dispensation. And even though it could, it may be doubted, whether such a visitant, if duly recognized and adored, might not disarray the ordinary organization of society and government, to a degree which He could scarcely prevent, without inconvenient, without even supernatural, interferences. Royal progresses suspend the business of the day as they pass; what would be the effect of the journeyings of such a monarch as this through the provinces of His spiritual empire? The ancient ardor of pilgrimages to the localities of a Christ crucified may give us some conception of the overwhelming influences of veneration and curiosity towards a Christ enthroned. While again, if we conceive Him to reside on earth, such as He is now in Heaven, it may be questioned, whether we do not demand a natural impossibility; and whether the glorified frame of Christ may not be of a structure which, though human, is wholly incompatible with the physical constitution of this world, and which, without a special miraculous endowment, could not

be endured by the feebleness of human organs. When the three Apostles saw Him in His transfiguration, "they fell on their faces and were sore afraid;" when Paul saw the light on the road to Damascus, "he fell to the earth;" and when His own beloved disciple, the privileged friend who had lain so often in His bosom, saw His glory in Patmos, he records that "he fell at His feet, *as dead.*" On such considerations as these I do not insist; not because they are not in themselves highly interesting and important, but because they do not, like the former, reflect additional light and instruction upon *our own actual* situation. However, as we are promised to be, in our degree, assimilated to Christ Himself in the future world, there is one objection to our entire statement, which this consideration of His glorified humanity readily obviates. It may be very naturally asked, if these multiplied inconveniences illustrate the wisdom of Christ, in declining to continue His personal manifestation after the day of His ascension, how shall the kingdom of glory itself be carried on, when we are to live in His presence? To this the reply is, that we are, by Scripture itself, justified in expecting, at that great crisis, such changes in man and his abode, as shall abundantly qualify him and it for the abiding presence of the Lord. I have enumerated no difficulties which we may not easily anticipate to be *then* overruled. The augmented energies of the promised "spiritual body" may diminish the extent of distance to such a degree, as to make the local presence of Christ no longer isolated or partial; the unworthiness of a mere human affection will assuredly, by knowledge, experience, and celestial graces, be refined into a higher spirituality; the discipline of faith shall have been completed and superseded; and the Church triumphant, composed of none but "the spirits of the just made perfect," shall present, to the welcome visitations of its Lord, none of the impediments that oppress the harassed and imperfect Church of this world.

5. I have reserved to the last a reason perhaps more really influential than any yet mentioned, but which I can only speak of now as a thing revealed, whose grounds I have no time to investigate. I have reserved it to the last, because I wish it to leave the deepest practical impression. It is intimated to us (and what tidings are these to the sorrowing people of God!) that the Church is, in all things, designed to be the perpetuated image of its Lord; to reflect Him in His humiliation as well as in His subsequent triumph, and thus, by progressive changes, to “*grow up in all things into Him which is the head.*” Christ suffered and now reigns; the Church suffers and shall reign; it is St Paul’s condition of *our* glorification, as it is St Peter’s of Christ’s; for if the latter tells you, that the prophets spake of “the sufferings of *Christ* and the glory that should follow,” the former, in nearly the same words, exhorts us to “suffer *with Him* that we may be *with Him* glorified.” Now, in each case, the cloud that intercepted the celestial light proper to each was the great cause of the temporary affliction of each; it *was* removed by the disclosure of the Father to Christ in heaven; it *will be* removed by the second coming of Christ to us. “Ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” declares the Apostle, bringing the perfect analogy of the relations in each instance before us; or, still more perspicuously, “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God;” and exactly as Christ’s humiliation was marked by the local absence (so to speak) of the Father, who was, in the economy of mediation, His head, so is the Church’s correspondent period of trial darkened by the similar absence of hers. And if, at any time, affliction too hard to be borne should press the body, or any of its individual members, “out of measure, above strength, insomuch that it despair even of life,” and be tempted to distrust the vigilant affection of an unseen Lord; let such remember that it is but passing through agonies which its great example traversed long before, when He had to utter to *His* divine head the ter-

rible expostulation on the cross, and take comfort from the thought, how brief was that period of darkness, by what surpassing glory followed. The cross must still be the banner of the faithful; the Church has not yet overpast Gethsemane and Calvary. If it were mysteriously requisite, that the Captain of Salvation should be, in relation to His office, "perfected through sufferings," and if, as the same oracle declares, "the sanctifier and the sanctified are of one," it is equally fitting, that "the many sons" to be "led to glory" should be led through the same pathway of sorrow; that they should be, like Him, undignified and unsustained by the visible patronage of heaven; that, their perfection being wrought out like His, they should present, and glory to present, the mournful counterpart of every grief He bore. May the Spirit of Christ enable His own to glory in sufferings so consecrated, and to fear no hurt as they "walk in the midst of the fire," seeing evermore in the burning fiery furnace another even as they, a willing prisoner in the flame, "*whose form is like the Son of God!*"

We have thus seen some of the reasons which, even to our human capacities, seem to make it "expedient" that Christ should "go away;" that the monarchy of the Church should, for the present dispensation, be an invisible monarchy.

On next Sunday I shall endeavor to bring before you the second, and still more practically important branch of the subject, which regards the management of this invisible supremacy by the agency of the Third Person of the blessed Trinity.

SERMON XX.

THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST THROUGH HIS SPIRIT.

(Preached before the University of Dublin.)

It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.—JOHN xvi. 7.

THE Church of God, owning, according to her uncorrupted polity, no single earthly head, and beholding in all her authorized governors, the deputies and images of authority not their own, looks straight to heaven for her monarch. Until carnal ambition had marred the majestic vision in presuming to *finish* the edifice, her gradations of power (from her thousands of inferior ministers to her few vast patriarchates) lessening in number as they rose, and thus insensibly narrowing to a single head, yet acknowledging none *on earth*, served as a continued and impressive confession of the absence of the one completing power; and men wondered the more at the symmetry of the visible structure, when the key-stone that crowned the arch was hidden beyond the clouds. But still, as represented in her faithful children, who require no vicarious Christ to remind them of the original, the Church of the living God avows it her calling and privilege to “walk by faith and not by sight,” to contemplate in the spirit what she shall yet witness in the body,—a “King set upon His holy hill of Zion.” She adores already the prophetic portrait of a Christ to

come: "His eyes are as a flame of fire, and on His head are many crowns, . . . and He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." Such will he yet appear, and such, in anxious faith, she sees Him now. The love of many is waxed cold, the practical rebellion of sloth, and pride, and worldliness abounds among us; the drunkard, and the voluptuary, and the profane, invite the lightnings of heaven upon the unhappy Church, whose nerveless arm is unable to expel them. But the good providence of our God still preserves the confession of this tremendous truth among its neglectors, and the voice of the universal Church to her Saviour is still, "Thy THRONE, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." That royalty, though real, is still unapparent in its fulness; the vast predictions of David and Isaiah are still to find their completion. Still have we to pray "Thy kingdom come." The Church lives without beholding her vivifier. The orb, whose attraction governs every element of our system, is still under eclipse,—eclipse which diminishes not *His* light, but ours.

In my last discourse I endeavored to suggest one or two of the reasons, which unite with deeper fitnesses (incomprehensible, perhaps, to human or angelic reason) to make this invisibility expedient. We found it suitable to the degraded condition of a world unworthy of the manifestation except in vengeance; and profitable for the diffusion of the professing, and the discipline of the believing, Church. We seem to see difficulties thus precluded, which could not otherwise be precluded; objects effected, which could otherwise be but imperfectly attained. We saw, that for that complete assimilation, through which Christ is so eminently glorified in His subjects, the absence was demanded of the mediatorial head of both, and all the peculiar trials which that absence brings. But this absence is not without a virtual, and, in some mysterious sense, even a real, presence

of that divine ruler, from whom we are, for a time, locally and bodily dissociated. This ineffable communion is accomplished through the agency of the Third Person of the blessed Trinity; and it is to *its* consideration that the order of the subject brings us this day.

It might be,—indeed I believe it has been,—urged, that, though Christ be thus invisible, His power is not the less direct; and that the intervention is superfluous of any third party between Him and the object of His superintendence. Assuredly it would be grievous presumption of any earthly mind to aspire to explain the entire grounds, or any one of the ultimate grounds, of this sublime dispensation. We cannot speak of such things in their own language, we can but babble of them in ours. However, the language of infants is intelligible to infants, and, though unworthy of the adult, it has a truth and propriety of its own. Something may be pronounced or conjectured, which may assist us towards discerning, not indeed the fathomless foundations of this law in the eternal Mind, but such harmonies and fitnesses, between it and other parts of the revealed system, as are within the observation of patient inquiry, and as may speak of even deeper truths to a reason which, after all, *is* “made in the image of God,” and may, therefore, hope, if not to grasp the substance, yet sometimes to see the shadow; if not to contemplate the inmost truth of things, yet at least to catch the outline and miniature, small but correct, of that incomprehensible reality.

The Scriptures of the New Testament reveal to us, then, the great truth, that Christ, though locally absent, is yet mysteriously present, to His Church collectively, and to its faithful members individually. Not only has he promised to be with His Church always, even unto the end of the world,—not only is it declared to be “His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,”—but its individual members are admonished that the same awful truth is personally applicable to themselves,—that they “eat of His

flesh and drink of his blood;" that "Christ is in them if they be not reprobates;" that "Christ is in them the hope of glory;" that "Christ dwells in their hearts by faith;" that "if Christ be in them, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life;" that "they live, yet not they, but Christ liveth in them." And that the Lord Jesus Christ, entire in each, and entire in all, should thus be the inhabitant of the hearts of His elect people, is, as you know, the mere fulfilment of *His own* clear, and direct, and reiterated promises.

I will venture to add, that clear apprehensions of this most awful subject are of the highest importance to all, who would thoughtfully harmonize their religious beliefs; of importance, especially, to all who are interested in the great controversy of the present day, that which regards the real value of the sacramental gifts. The matter, however, presented orally, is unavoidably a little intricate; and I must, therefore, again ask you to remember that, being engaged to consider the invisible government of Christ through His Spirit, I now speak, first, of the presence of Christ which the Spirit conveys to us; secondly, of the presence of Christ which the Spirit represents to us; thirdly, of the sovereignty of Christ as the true fountain of *all* spiritual presences and blessings to His Church.

Now there are, I conceive, two forms of the presence of Christ indicated in Scripture, a direct presence and an indirect presence; in both of which the Third Person of the blessed Trinity is concerned, though in different ways. In the direct presence of Christ, the Spirit is the agent which conveys Christ; in the indirect presence, He is the agent which represents Christ. On each of these mysterious facts it is now our duty, with all humility, to reflect. The suggestions I offer are not meant to penetrate to their fundamental reasons, but to illustrate by revealed analogies.

I. We know that Christ has assumed His human nature

into heaven, and preserves it there inseparable from His divinity. The Apostles beheld Him ascend as a man, the angels declared to them that "that same Jesus should so come in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven. He is, therefore, still a man, unless he undergo a second incarnation before His return to this world. He Himself declared that He held the sceptre of *judgment*, as being "the Son of man;" and that men should yet see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power." It was, in the scheme of redemption, essentially requisite (as St Paul has unfolded the type of expiation,—Heb. ix. 10) that the sacrificed nature should itself be presented in the heavenly sanctuary; and to that same sacrificed nature appertain the high results of the sacrifice, as St Peter emphatically preached it to the Jews,—“God hath made *that same Jesus whom ye crucified* both Lord and Christ.” The anthems of the saved rise, not to the deity of Christ disrobed of the inferior nature, but to “the Lamb that was slain.” “The forerunner,” we are told, “hath entered within the veil;” but He could scarcely be the forerunner of men except as man; “He is not ashamed to call them brethren;” He is “touched with a feeling of our infirmities;” He retains, then, the heart and sympathies of a man. “To him that overcometh He will give to sit on His throne,” as He sits on “the throne” of His Father; the unity of the Godhead enabling Him to partake the throne of a God, the unity of the manhood enabling Him to share His with us; the double nature thus empowering the same Christ to touch, with each hand, the extremities of being. However difficult, then, it be for us to conceive the localization, in that mysterious world, of a human frame, real, though refined, doubtless, to an ethereal purity; real, though made worthy to accompany, as its appropriate possession, an infinite essence; real and inseparable, though not in any sense limiting the immensity of the Godhead; whatever difficulties this fact may present to the imagination (and in

truth it presents no greater difficulty to either reason or imagination than any other connexion of the infinite with the finite), it must be received as the glorious basis and guarantee of all the eternal hopes of man.

Now, while this truth is carefully preserved, while it is admitted compatible with the reality of Christ's divinity, it must also be held compatible with the divine attributes of Christ's complex *person*; a point much more commonly mistaken. Though the bodily frame of Christ is essentially limited by the law of place, that single person, which is at once divine and human, possesses all its divine prerogatives unimpaired; though the simple manhood be as such restricted, the person is unlimited in energy and presence. The "manhood being taken into God," but the person subsistent from eternity, the Christian verity forbids us to imagine, that the person, thus complicated, has suffered by the addition; not the eternal Son alone is divine, but Christ is divine; not the Son alone omnipresent, but Christ is omnipresent. So truly is this the case, that on the participation of the personal Christ all undying life is *by Himself suspended*. Now, with the Son of God all creation participates, as the effect with the absolute cause from which it emanates, as a work is the image of its conceiver's purpose and plan; for "by Him God made the worlds." And, therefore, the natural existence of man is thus connected with Him, as being one part of the universal effect. But to unite the great cause with His work, and convey into it those divine elements of perfection which were in Him,—to make the Word, infinite in itself, *apparent* in a limited creation, and enable God, contemplating it as His own shadow in the world of time and sense, to say that all "was good;" for these purposes, or such as these, the intervention is manifestly revealed of a third agent, active through every department of that inferior stage of being, the agent who even then was designated as the "Spirit of God," and who is so often termed the "Finger," and the "Power"

of the Omnipotent, "moving on the face of the waters," and "garnishing the heavens," and vivifying our human dust. Now if the Church be (as it is perpetually described) a "new creation," correspondent on a higher level to the old, is it not absolutely accordant with the analogy of the divine dispensations, that when,—no longer as the omnipotent Son of God alone, but as the omnipotent Christ,—no longer by natural influence, but by supernatural inherency,—the exalted Saviour mystically enters, in order to accomplish His high intent, that soul of man which is to be the scene and material of His work, the same Spirit of God, in the loftier character of the "Holy Spirit," should re-appear as a necessary agent in this wonderful incorporation? But when, rising from the analogy of the natural world, you "compare spiritual things with *spiritual*," the harmony becomes more remarkable still. It is expressly revealed that the Spirit of God was the immediate effector of the transcendent mystery of the *Incarnation*. Now the Church of Christ is designed as the continued representative of Himself on earth, and in all its faithful members realizes the design. It is declared to be with Him "crucified," "buried," "risen," "ascended;" and as it is His image in all these particulars, so is its image in *these* based upon the same primary fact,—upon a counterpart, humble, indeed, but real, of that Incarnation which first enshrined the divine essence in human clay. If the Spirit of God was required as the appropriate agent in the one, can we not discern a similar propriety in His efficacy in the other? And in this view of His operation mysteriously combined with that of Christ, introductory of it and perfective of it, can we not follow the train of our Lord's discourse, when, after solemnly proclaiming that "whoso eateth His flesh and drinketh His blood hath eternal life," He declares, in illustration of His meaning, that "it is *the Spirit* that quickeneth?" The two are blended here as they were in the first scene of our redemption. The Son of God invested

not Himself with manhood independently of the Holy Ghost; He descends not to be the inhabitant of our hearts now without the same intermediation.

On the whole, Christ, in the fulness of His complex personality, is enabled, by a true though most mysterious omnipresence, to pervade at will the body, collectively and individually, of His earthly followers. Being God as well as man, He is the very fountain and principle of divine holiness; being man as well as God, He is the appropriate source of all human blessedness. Therefore is He Himself the holiness He gives, He Himself at once the spring and the river of these living waters. This seems the universal, certainly the customary, law of Providence, that earthly changes should be gradual; and if, in human progress to celestial perfection, all must be thus preparatory, it may be anticipated that some term must intervene between us and that Christ whom we are fully to enjoy hereafter, which may connect us here; nor could we imagine anything more answerable to these expectations, than this invisible presence of our gracious Lord, which makes those associates in a spiritual mystery now, who are to be associates by the blessed vision hereafter.

But if such a gift as this be ours, the objection returns with redoubled force. What *further* need of the Holy Spirit in the economy of grace, except for the alleged purpose of conveying it? Speaking with all humility, I venture to observe, that there seems intimated a peculiarity regarding this personal presence of Christ, which, if real, separates it generically from the co-ordinate graces of His Spirit. We read not of it as capable of *degree*, as present more or less; we read of it as present altogether, or not at all. A gift of this definite nature, though at once the foundation of all and the loftiest of all, is not alone sufficient for the state and position of man in this world. The entire system of redemption is a *remedial* system, and must, therefore, suit itself to the circumstances of the patient;

and if (as is most certain) the warfare of probation be necessary for the perfection of man, the supernatural assistances must *vary in force*, to make it indeed a warfare. Hence, over and above *that personal indwelling of Christ*, in which the Holy Spirit is the incorporating agent, the faithful disciples of the same Christ are blest (in all its varieties both of quality and of degree) with *the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself*. But so completely is Christ "first and last" in the new creation, that even this direct inhabitaney of the Holy Ghost in the souls of men is described as proceeding from Him and representing Him. I mention this, not only to carry out my immediate subject, the omnipresent government of our invisible Master in all its forms, but also because I seem sometimes to perceive, in a large class of theological writers, a kind of holy jealousy for the supreme honor of the Son of man; as if everything ascribed to the special energy of the Third Person of the Trinity, in the management of the Church, were withdrawn from the Second. Now it is abundantly certain that, whatever be the precise measure of this spiritual activity, exerted as His proper function by the Holy Ghost, we should deeply err if we conceived of it, as in any sense separating us from the personal influences of Him with whom it is, in truth, designed to serve as a more perfect bond of connection. The Holy Ghost lives in the soul under this dispensation, as the Spirit of Christ; we are not to regard Him in the mere simplicity of His infinite deity, but as sent forth by the God and man, Christ Jesus, as His: nor is the abiding presence of this holy principle less essentially divine because bestowed and operative under special conditions and a special aspect. On this account he is perpetually described by titles, which impress how truly His function is transmissory of perfections that dwell in Christ, and are ours only because His. This Spirit is the "Spirit of the Son," the "Spirit of Christ," the "Spirit of Jesus Christ." The two divine personages bear the same title in the work

of mediation, as it now proceeds; they are both denominated Paracletes, the one in the Gospel of St John, the other in his first Epistle; and the work of intercession, to which that term mainly applies, is elsewhere expressly declared to be carried on by both. And thence, when the Holy Ghost is first announced under that designation, He is called by Christ "*another Comforter,*" as He had been a Comforter. All His offices, as they regard the publication of divine truth, are declared by Christ to have direct relation to Him; "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive *of mine;*" "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever *I have said;*" "He shall not speak *of Himself,* but whatsoever He shall *hear* that shall He speak." And His convictions of the world, whether of sin, of righteousness, or of judgment, are wrought in relation to Christ respectively, to unbelief of Christ, to the ascension of Christ, to the victory of Christ. So complete is the *practical* indentification, that the position of both is pronounced the very same in this world: if it be declared of the Lord of Truth that the world "hateth Him" and "hath not known Him," the same discourse pronounces of the promised Spirit of Truth, that "the world cannot receive Him, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him;" the Spirit of Christ in our human nature being to pass through the same world with the same results as the Godhead of Christ had done before; and the faithful Church being (as I already hinted) through the inherence of its Lord, and of the Spirit of its Lord, an image of His Incarnation, prolonged, through successive ages, with all its accompaniments of rejection, humiliation, and wrong. This Holy Spirit, then, proceeding essentially, as the elder Church implicitly held, and the majority of the modern Church expressly maintains, from the eternal Son as well as from the Father, its presence is effectively the presence of the Trinity, and sent, in the fulness of time, by one who was man as well as God, it comes with a superadded tincture

of that celestialized humanity, which alone, perhaps, could fit it for its office of addressing our earthly humanity; it transmits, not the incommunicable graces of the pure Godhead, but the graces of "the man Christ Jesus;" and, issuing from the depths at once of divine and human nature (for when the person of Christ became human as well as divine, that Spirit which proceedeth eternally from Him, and was sent in time from the same Christ, could not but be mysteriously affected by the change), it is "a living water," because it infuses an essence from "Christ who is our life:" being His hand and seal, whereby we are "sealed unto the day of redemption," it stamps His entire signature; it "forms," as an Apostle expressed it, "Christ within us." Hence it has often been observed, that the two divine Persons are sometimes represented as co-operating, in a way of intimacy which requires faculties beyond ours to dis sever. The last Adam is made "a quickening Spirit." The "Spirit giveth life," which Christ is and bestows. So, "if Christ be in us, the Spirit is life;" and our law is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;" and "by one Spirit we are baptized into one body," which body is Christ's. "The Lord *is* that Spirit," which yet is "the Spirit *of* the Lord." And so in other similar complexities of expression, which we have now no time to cite, far less to attempt to classify, but all of which point to an intimate combination of operations that are nevertheless distinct. Indeed it seems to be the very genius of these highest mysteries of our religion, that in them all tends to a mystic unity of action, nothing seems done in which all are not, though diversely, doers. The law of love, which obtains as the master principle of our earthly Christianity, is but the reflection, in the world of time, of the absolute communion that ineffably subsists, in the world of eternity, between the persons of the three-fold Deity. "That they all may be one," said our Lord, "*as we* are one!"

The Holy Spirit, then, in His direct, as in his subordinate or instrumental presence, is the agent, not of disjunction, but of combination, between the faithful and their Lord; Christ still continuing the fountal reservoir of all the graces communicated. "Of *His* fulness have we all received, and grace for grace;" "grace according to the *measure of the gift of Christ.*" The same passage which declares, that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," continues by declaring its special bearing upon our state, telling us, that "in *Him* we are *filled*," yea, even (as it is elsewhere said) "unto all the fulness of God." This, then, being understood, and forming the internal link between the two forms of the Spirit's energy, the one, in which Christ is present directly, and the Spirit indirectly as the effector of the mystery, "the *friend* of the bridegroom,"—the other in which the Spirit is directly inherent, and Christ through Him representatively,—we must now regard more particularly the nature and purpose of the latter gift, or presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul. The remarks which I shall offer may, however, be considered as in a great degree applicable to both, being directed to the subject of inward divine presences in general. My object shall now be, as briefly as I can, to establish that the great revelation of the New Testament, on this subject, is really in strict analogy with the entire Bible history of the origin of our race, and, by the story of its lapse, is best, and for all reasonable purposes sufficiently elucidated.

The clearest general view of this matter, I believe, may be obtained by considering it as the *counterpart* to that tremendous activity of the spirit of darkness, which has continued incessantly since the fall of man. It has often been said that Satan perpetually imitates the operations of God; the observation seems, in some remarkable instances, founded in truth; but, as regards the main features of the Christian scheme, I am inclined to think that the reverse approaches more near to the reality. The remedy

must succeed the disease ; and, being directed to meet its prominent points, must, in many instances, bear to it the analogy of immediate contrast. The outlines must resemble, though the coloring and expression be opposed ; and though God had, doubtless, from the beginning, projected the forms of beauty with which He would in the end adorn the original ground of our nature, yet, in the evolution of time and events, the glowing tints from His celestial pencil came in to supplant the gloomy shadows that already defiled the canvas. Alas ! so ingrained, too, is the substance defiling in the substance defiled, that, in this life, it can never be wholly eradicated, or even wholly overlaid !

What account, then, not metaphysically or psychologically, but *spiritually*, do the Scriptures give us of the state of our nature, on that side of it which looks towards the redeeming work of Christ ? To this the answer is rapid and easy. We find it everywhere represented (either by assertion or by implication) as spiritually dead, as infected with a curse and condemnation, such that every human soul is, as it were, *still-born* into this world ; nor need I now insist, how emphatically experience confirms this lamentable truth. We find it clearly intimated, moreover, that God is pleased to view men as aggregates under a single head, seeing them in their sources as well as in themselves ; a law made visible in the Jewish economy, witnessed (for the substance of it) in all nature, by the inheritance of bodily and mental characteristics from parents and ancestors, and attested in grace, by the constant contrast of the first and second Adam, as the respective fountains of curse and of blessing. The efficacy of each illustrates, and is made in the inspired page to illustrate that of the other. As we find that to Adam are ascribed the natural death of all men, the spiritual death of all in this life, and, if carried out, its necessary consummation in eternal ruin ; so to Christ are attributed the contrasted gifts, resurrection to all men, spiritual life to such as He visits in this world,

and its appropriate completion in eternal glory. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we are amply warranted in expecting to understand each by each. May we not, then, gain some light as to the formal nature of the spiritual gift, by examining what is the formal nature of the curse inherited from Adam by the human race? I do not now consider either in the way of imputation, but in the way of inherence.

St Paul must here be our chief instructor. As in one place he tells us that, "as *in Adam all die*, so in Christ shall all be made alive;" so, in the more extended notice already referred to, he enlarges on the nature of the transmission. In Romans, v. 12–21, he affirms, among other truths, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" that "the judgment is from one unto condemnation;" that "by one man's offence death reigned;" that "by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." It is certain, then, that, explain it how we will, and though we could not explain it at all, we inherit *sin* (and consequently death) from Adam. Now what is sin? That St Paul may be his own interpreter, we turn to the seventh chapter of the same Epistle, and we there find, in distinct characters, St Paul's theory of sin. I use the word "theory" allowably, for the long and profound passage in question is really an elaborate theological argument, and, though wrought out in those forms of rapid eloquence that eminently belong to the Pauline inspiration, really approaches nearer to the exactness of philosophical disquisition, than any passage of equal length in the Bible. In a passage, then, whose decisions no man can slight, as the pardonable exaggerations of pious ardor,—for thus men *have* dared to speak of expressions elsewhere, which their hearts had not risen to the power of interpreting,—in such a passage as this, close, careful, and argumentative, St Paul has told us that sin is something inseparable from human nature indeed, but altogether and essentially *distinct* from it. He had, in the

previous chapter, spoken of sin as "*reigning* in the body," of men as being "*the servants of sin*," a master whose "*wages* are death,"—of being "*freed* from sin," and of sin "*not having dominion*" over those who are "*under grace*;" expressions which all import the real distinctness of evil from the human personality. He now declares, as the substance of a long series of considerations, that "if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, *but sin that dwelleth* in me;" and this he asserts twice in the same words (vv. 17, 20), as if to impress on his readers that the principle was of the highest importance in the theory of the Christian revelation. Nor can we interpret the principle as importing less than that the element of sin, though inwrought and universal in human nature, is still foreign to it, and its government an usurpation. While, to assure us of this, "the mind" with which "we serve the law of God," "the inner man," which "assents to the law of God," and "the desire" to perform it (vv. 15, 18), though ineffective,—all terms which express the amount of natural light which survived the fall,—exclaim against the intrusion of this tyrant of our unhappy nature. This account of sin is verified by all those innumerable forms of expression which attribute it to the direct and constant energy of *Satan*,—of *Satan*, however, *within* as truly as without us; *this* point forming the transition to the opposite (but, as I am prepared to show, not *contradictory*) aspect of this mysterious influence of evil. For while the *distinctness* of this principle is, as we have seen, in every form implied, we also undeniably find the whole strain of Scripture implying that the element of sin is in us, becomes a part of us not naturally separable, the corrupting constituent of a corrupt nature, imputable to us, moreover, as our own choice, and thence rendering us personally subject to the aversion of a righteous and holy God. These things show, that all acts of sin are the yielding to a direct *temptation*, in the truest sense,—the yielding (and often, as experience and St Paul's authority

establish, against our anxious wish) to the suggestions of a tempter, himself essentially hostile to God; a tempter, who so subdues our will to his purpose, that it is, from the beginning of our life, practically, though not literally, one with his. In the intensity of his power, that is, in the degree of our servitude of will, lies the exact measure of the virulence of sin, *under* which we are prostrate, yet *with* which we are blended; as, in the strong and direct affirmations of St Paul, in the perpetual closeness of the intimacy asserted, in the very nature of spiritual energies, in the production of bodily disease and death as the natural evolution of inward principles of physical (dependent on moral) evil,—especially in the peculiar case of insanity, and perhaps still more in the expressive exhibition of demoniacal possession at the time of Christ, we are compelled to recognize a mysterious inherency of the governing principle, an indwelling, distinct from the man but to the man inseparably adherent, of an essence or nature derived directly from that being whom we are taught to regard as to us the fountain of all active evil. This spirit can be expelled, and it can return, while its effects, as attested by the universal law of death, and the imperfection of the best efforts of even the “spiritual man,” are, to a certain extent, in this world irremediable. The evil spirit has the advantage of priority in each soul as it springs to life, and he uses it: no poison so virulent can leave the constitution as it found it; and the Spirit of God in this world has to wander among ruins!

Such being the nature of evil, the association of an accursed element with our nature, it surely would seem that it must, in accordance with all the intimations of Holy Writ, be met and counteracted by the introduction of an element of holiness really abiding as *it* is abiding, really distinct as *it* is distinct, the seed of eternal life as *it* is of death eternal. And it is not difficult to show, that these three characteristics are precisely those of the regenerating

and renovating gift of the new covenant, of that blessed effluence which was first formally sent as the regal largess of Christ Jesus; which *externally*, or in itself regarded, is termed the "Holy Spirit," or "Spirit of Christ;" which *internally*, as in a manner consubstantiated with the human soul, is termed *Spirit*, in opposition to flesh, and in contrast to mind. The analogy seems complete. The original corruption consists, not in the evil of every faculty (as some thoughtlessly speak), for our faculties are neither good nor evil (except as all that comes from God is good); they have no moral character whatever; conscience itself is not moral, but actions referred to conscience;—the corruption consists in the superadded presence of a principle, once inherent in Adam, thence by the spirit of evil perpetuated to us, which governs the will and perverts the faculties into the machinery of sin. The regenerating gift must, *in like manner*, consist, and is in Scripture amply evidenced to consist, not in the annihilation of any of our natural faculties, but in the indwelling of a principle once inherent in Christ, and from Him transmitted to all who in Him are "born of the Spirit;" a principle which, as it advances, displaces its rival, as it retreats, admits it, when it shall make us wholly its own, shall wholly dispossess it, when it deserts us, yields the heart once more and altogether to ruin.

I shall close with a further circumstance of comparison, which I submit to your patient reflection. Our indwelling sin is declared to be traceable to Adam, in a manner accurately corresponding (as the Apostle intimates) to the headship of Christ. Our holiness is referrible to Christ, as you know, not merely in the way of imputation, of which I am not at present speaking, but also through that spiritual gift, which is the fruit of His Incarnation and victory. These, we know, were no waste of divine mercy, but the requisite remedies for corresponding evils. May we not, then, allowably conceive, that in Adam (as also, doubtless, in her who, together with him, forms the natural origin of our race)

was realized, in a true and intelligible sense, the human incarnation of the mysterious principle of evil, which, from that incarnation, as its necessary pre-requisite (in virtue of that fatal victory when alone in the story of this world a soul born upright fell), and, having completed the formal condition of combining itself with human nature, being no longer a spirit external to us, but, so to speak, humanized in Adam, and from him deriving a character qualifying it to act upon us his wretched descendants,—from these and such like sources, I say, acquired a power accurately answering to that of Christ, of transmitting an evil influence of darkness, a manifestation of itself, into human souls, insomuch that at the instant when life is dawning there is, by this accursed agency, bound up with every soul of man a substantial presence of evil, there to remain, the relentless tyrant of the will, until exorcised by the corresponding presence of holiness, the mystic “Spirit of Christ,” the *second* Adam. “Original sin” is thus in its *source* and generation, as well as in its active efficacy, the terrible counterpart of supernatural grace; to be born in sin (so often the scoff of the infidel) ceases to be more incredible than to be regenerated to purity; a tremendous harmony seems discoverable in the great mystery of God, parting into its two regions which Scripture has (as if with purposed contrast) designated the mystery of iniquity and the mystery of godliness; the author of the former being, by a fearful resemblance to his celestial adversary, first “manifested” in sinless “flesh,” that his work might be “witnessed” by his own ministering “angels,” and “believed on” in a benighted “world.” Twice was our nature in its original purity entered by powers above itself; each has left its representative, as the fruits of its triumph, in the respective spirits of evil and of good, of light and darkness, of truth and of deception, of Christ and of Satan.

We have now seen the special function of the Comforter whom Christ was to send, and have endeavored to illustrate,

by generalizing them, the circumstances of the transmission. If you reflect on these views, you will probably have anticipated, before the period when I may next be enabled to address you, many of the remaining considerations to be then offered in completion of the subject,—in illustration of the nature of this divine indwelling, in proof of its perfect consistency with the freedom of the human will, and (as the third branch of our general subject) of the propriety that the ascension of Christ Himself to celestial glory should precede this mysterious presence, thus perpetuated in the Church at large, as a divinely organized constitution, and in the hearts of its believing members.

SERMON XXI.

CHRIST'S DEPARTURE THE CONDITION OF THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT.

(Preached before the University of Dublin.)

It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.—JOHN xvi. 7.

THE gift of Christ and of His Spirit, resident as Paraclete in the Church, forms, as I have endeavored in the last discourse to illustrate, the direct counterpart to that other fatal gift, which, like it, was superadded to the simplicity of our original nature. Man was made “a living soul,” by the creative Spirit which “*breathed* into his nostrils the breath of life;” and, with expressive propriety, God incarnate, emitting a re-creative Spirit, employed the same action, when promising to breathe into His Apostles the breath of a new life. He said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” The latter endowment, however, neither destroyed nor renewed the former; it was meant to meet and overcome that which had subsequently entered as a principle of rebellion and ruin. In Adam and Eve alone, of all the human race, existed our nature in its elementary simplicity; the Satanic intrusion, at the moment of their fall, burdened it with an alien principle of evil, thence, in right of that gloomy conquest, transmitted to their heirs for ever; the divine incarnation, equally, superadded to it a celestial supplement, in right of Christ's victory transmitted to all who

are His, and bound up immortally with the substance of their being. Both are hidden from human consciousness, even as the soul itself is; like it, both are known by the results of their secret activity. The motions of the carnal man, and the motions of the spiritual man; the active vices of the natural mind, and the living graces of the regenerate mind; the deeds of darkness and the deeds of light; the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit (as you find them contrastedly enumerated in Galat. v., and such like passages);—all these are the respective manifestations, in the sphere of action and of consciousness, of the two rival principles, themselves sunk in the secret depths of the souls of men.

It has indeed been very commonly held, yet I cannot but think on slender foundations, that Adam himself possessed the supernatural graces which are now issued by Christ, or graces correspondent to them. Our inspired information respecting the first man is very limited, yet I cannot but think it nearly decisive against this doctrine. The expressions commonly quoted are certainly quite insufficient to establish it. We are told that he was created "upright" (Eccles. vii. 29), and "in the image of God." The former term manifestly imports no more than that he was formed without any taint of positive sin, in contradistinction from his descendants. The latter is sufficiently answered when we regard him as possessed of all the higher faculties of humanity, in their unfettered development, their due authority, and their mutual harmony,—conscience, intellectual powers, freedom of will, and dominion over the creatures; these being the qualities which make man in this world analogous to what God is in the universe. The further ascription seems to depend chiefly on two expressions of St Paul, one of which speaks of "the new man," as "after God" (in conformity with God's will, *κατὰ θεόν*) "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24); from which it is inferred, that Adam's resemblance

must have coincided with these characters, and thence been identical with the Christian's; as if the resemblance to God (supposing it here intended) may not consist in a vast variety of particulars all excellent, but all distinct, and some more excellent than others;—the other passage (Col. iii. 10) declaring that “the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator,” the Creator, whose image is here said to be stamped upon the regenerate, being assuredly Christ Himself as revealed in the Gospel, according to the expression (Eph. ii. 10), that the Christian is “created in Christ Jesus,” and having no relation (except, perhaps, that of very remote allusion) to the original formation of man in a divine image. But what seems decisively to prove that Adam did not possess the supernatural graces in question, is this; that these graces are now, and are admitted to be, essentially connected with the immortality of glory; that that immortality to Adam was suspended upon his eating of the “tree of life;” and that he never did eat of the tree of life. I need not recall to your memory the awful words of his expulsion: “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now *lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*” therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, “to till the ground from whence he was taken.” Hence it is that, in the visions of the Revelation, the same “tree of life” re-appears in heaven, and re-appears also as the immediate gift of Christ. “On either side of the river was the tree of life” (xxii. 2). “To him that overcometh *will I* give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (ii. 7).

As these considerations seem plainly enough to show that in our parents in Paradise we see the simple substratum of humanity, self-dependent, and its self-dependence overthrown; so the whole strain of Scripture bears testimony to the Satanic nature of the added element, from the hour of the fall perpetuated in and around us. “The

enemy who soweth tares is the devil." "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." "Satan entered into Judas." "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them who believe not." "We wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this world;" we "withstand the wiles of the devil." "The prince of the power of the air" is expressly declared to be "the spirit that *now worketh in the* children of disobedience." Men may be recovered "out of the snare of the devil," who are "taken captive by him," and thus "delivered from the power of darkness." Prompting the first murder, for "Cain was of that wicked one," his instigation shall urge the last, for *his* shall they be who are to "compass the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (Rev. xx. 9). Revealed first in a serpentine form, preparatory to his entrance into the human soul (both intrusions, perhaps, being necessary to his power over the brute and the rational creations), in that form, as if to recall the prolonged identity of his nature and agency, is he spoken of in the closing scenes of the latter days, when, as we read, an angel shall "lay hold on the dragon, *that old serpent*, which is the devil and Satan." These declarations, with others already cited, that regard the *servitude* of sin, sufficiently detect the true source of this world's wickedness; but when we read of this evil principle as "a spirit *working in* the disobedient," and when we remember the expressions of St Paul regarding the inherency yet distinctness of sin, and when we consider more closely the very nature of spiritual influences, we can scarcely refuse to recognize in this diabolical agency no distant or accidental operation, but the very thing we all can feel yet none can explain; that indwelling tyranny, separate from the man, but utterly incorporated with the man, which is so mysteriously interwoven in his nature that the will is a will and yet a captive, and the tyrant and the slave blended inconceivably in one. Perfectly correspond-

ent to this, and neither more nor less inexplicable than this is, the spirit of the second Adam *inheres* in the human soul.

Speculations that undertake to explain this mystery are an infallible proof that the speculator does not understand either the place of the mystery or the conditions of an explanation. To *explain* a fact is to resolve it into facts more general; but *these* facts are absolutely *unique* in creation. But it would show equal short-sightedness to affirm that the ameliorative addition is *more* truly mysterious than the corruptive addition, or this latter less certain from the evidence of conscience than the fact of a will is from the evidence of consciousness. The pulpit is scarcely the place for metaphysical discussion, but the course of the subject has now brought us so directly in front of the great general objection against the possibility of extrinsic influence on a will, that, in order to remove this obstacle to receiving the scriptural revelation, I must ask your special attention to a few sentences.

For the freedom of the will, that is, for the will itself, which is essentially free, there are two requisites: first, that the will should be *self-determinant*, so that every action is its own action; and, secondly, that there should exist a true *choice*, in which notion there is always a possibility implied of the will taking a course contrary to that which is in fact taken. These two characteristics seem to be essential to the formal essence of the human (or, indeed, of any) will. Being totally different from every physical operation or event, they cannot be illustrated by anything in nature. From the existence of such essential properties, it would seem to follow (as the objectors earnestly maintain) that a connection of causality cannot be admitted possible between any extrinsic agent and a will, without the latter instantly losing its very essence; and, consequently, that, at best, the Pelagian theory which confines spiritual aids to the mere suggestion of motives, must comprehend the entire operations of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man.

But to this I reply, that their own system admits the human will to transcend all the laws of physical experience; that, therefore, *it is not demonstrably impossible* (and this is all which I am called upon to establish) that a connection may subsist between two wills or spirits, distinct from the particular physical connection of cause and effect, which nevertheless may be as *true* a connection as direct causality, and attended with as *real* results. To say that this is inconceivable by human imagination, and unexampled in human experience, is only to attribute to it the character which belongs to every possible account of the subject. The question is, whether, when the entire matter is admitted to overpass the laws of physical experience (as is granted in the confession of those adversaries who deny the applicability to it of the physically universal law of causation), we are to be precluded from supposing that *another* unknown mode of connection may exist, because, forsooth, unprecedented in that experience which the case is allowed to transcend. Nor is it to be objected, that we designate this connection (as Scripture also does) by titles which seem to imply direct mechanical causation; that we call it the guidance, or governance, or direction of the will; the necessity for such terms is found in the restricted conceptions, and, consequently, restricted phraseology of men. But the course of our reasoning has long since insinuated the important observation, that the general strain of Scripture really points to a connection between the spirit of a man and the Spirit of the eternal God, distinct from literal causality. We have seen that it speaks of a mysterious indwelling or incorporation, by which the will of man, without losing its essential self-activity and personal choice in relation to an understood law, and, therefore, without losing that responsibility and susceptibility of retribution, which depend upon them and upon them alone, does become blended with the abiding spirit of good or of evil; and, receiving into it a principle of life or death, is modified

accordingly. No man can adequately explain the fact; but no man can warrantably pronounce it either impossible in itself, or contradictory to the essence and definition of a human will. It is vain to assert that such a combination is unsupported by analogical experience, for it does not appeal to the analogies of experience; it is vain to say that it is unwitnessed by consciousness, for it passes in a region to which consciousness cannot attain.

When we term this supernatural fact an *indwelling*, whether of sin, or of Christ and His Spirit, we do so, partly in order to preserve, with scrupulous and reverential accuracy, the pregnant expressions of inspiration; partly because this kind of language seems to come nearest to figuring, in the forms of sense, the mysterious intimacy of this spiritual connection. But besides this, we are to remember, that though this marvellous visitant from heaven be thus seated in the spirit of man, its efficacy is represented as extending to the body; to the body, whether in itself and exclusively, or as destined to be perpetuated substantially hereafter, or as the temporary representative of a nobler material organism, which is to enshrine the Spirit in glory. It is the awful charge of the Apostle, that we should remember our bodies are "temples of the Holy Ghost which is in us, which we have from God;" and that bodily purity should be based upon this high conviction. We are told that this gift so far affects our corporeal nature, that "He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us." This union, then, profoundly spiritual, is yet so far connected with the body and with its concerns, as to be fitly expressed in language that regards and includes them; and, even *as* spiritual, it is, in the same sense as the Spirit itself to which it attaches, capable of the language of location and inherency.

In everything of this transcendent nature the conceptions and phraseology of sense can only allegorize the

truth; but they are at least as admissible here as in the ordinary reasonings of natural theology. If the universal activity of God in creation be concluded to infer an universal presence of God, as Creator and Sustainer; if regarding a Being, who from His nature can have no proper relation to place at all, our best notion of the presence is derived from the activity, so that wherever we witness eminent results of the activity, there we say He is eminently present; how much more (even apart from the inspired intimations) should we indulge the holy confidence of pronouncing Him, in the fullest sense our feeble conceptions will admit, *most* intensely present where He is most divinely active, of knowing Him spiritually omnipresent, as God the Sanctifier, no less than naturally omnipresent, as God the Creator! The Spirit of God, consecrating the inanimate elements, "moved on the face of the waters," and thus made itself successively present to all the heaving mass; surely we might trust that the intimacy of operation, shadowed in this language, would be more perfectly realized, when the agent had become the Spirit of holiness, infusing the harmony of a diviner life, even "the *law of the Spirit of life*," into the darker chaos of the soul. Whatever be the nature of the union which has such an agent and such an object as this,—the agent an Almighty Spirit, the object, the renovation of a lost soul unto the image and eternal companionship of Christ,—we may well conclude that nothing *remote* can reach it; that the new creation, to be wrought at all, must be wrought as an energy, and an abiding inseparable energy; that, as the life of nature is the manifestation of a principle permanent and inward, so is the life of grace; that men must not only be subject to the Spirit, but "*have the Spirit*," that the drawing of the Father must be, not by outward compulsions, but by inward attractions; and the promise, not to "guide" us only, but to "put a new spirit *within* us."

When, from general reasonings of this kind, that tend

to remove apparent obstacles and predispose for the conviction, we pass to the Scriptures themselves, we discover the clearest intimations that the new creation does consist of, or arise out of, this glorious element added to our nature, and permanently, appropriately ours. Some of these have been already noticed, and many must, to such hearers as I address, have been suggested by the mere course of the argument. A few brief considerations may direct and quicken the current of your own subsequent reflections. I do not pretend to exhaust the subject, but simply to set you thinking on it.

1. We find the spiritual reciprocity of Christ constantly represented as truly a *reciprocity*, in distinction from an operation merely external; sometimes by such phrases as the "dwelling of Christ by faith," the "being filled" with His fulness, the possessing "Him in us as we are in Him," and innumerable others, referring directly either to Christ, or to the Spirit as His gift; sometimes by a peculiar body of metaphors appropriated (as a kind of verbal sacraments) to the mystery, such as those of the "living water," and the "bread of life," or "living bread which cometh down from heaven," the flesh and blood to be eaten and drank; the receiving and incorporation of nutriment being the most interior, and permanent, and necessary of physical processes, at once blending itself with the body by assimilation, and modifying its entire condition by its own salutary qualities, increasing the substance of the body, yet undistinguishable from it by the closest inspection. The sixth chapter of St John's Gospel is, indeed, decisive of the point; and those whose fastidious criticism is impatient of mystery in the story of a communion between man and his incomprehensible Creator, would do well to remember, that it was at *this* discourse that "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him," while the happy faith of a Peter, whose understanding could soar no higher than theirs, upon a point which levels the intellect

of a Newton and of an infant, was enabled to cry, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *Thou* hast the words of eternal life!"

2. But metaphors, realized in actions, are still more expressive; and in the Eucharistic sacrament is perpetuated an image of the great gift of the Gospel sanctification, which no man can misconceive; an image, the value of which, for my present purpose, is altogether independent of any particular opinion as to the blessing attached to the rite itself. How far soever that holy sacrament be exalted or depressed, the living allegory of the rite still evidences the point now at issue; that the grace abides internally, and that, through whatever instrumentality, it consists in a true incorporation of Christ with our human nature.

3. The same principle is at least *recognized* in those parables which speak of the kingdom of God within us, or the blessing won and offered by Christ, under the figure of a seed sown by a celestial husbandman, of a plant planted by the Father, of the internal communication of vegetable life from vine to branches, of a hidden treasure, of an intrusted talent, of a holy leaven. It forms the very soul of that prayer with which our Lord solemnly closed His ministry, and in which His anxious heart fondly viewed the Church as He would have it.

4. But perhaps, above all, the reality of this divine presence, permanently lodged in the soul, is illustrated by the contrasted cases of demoniacal possession and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. We have seen that the original inhabitaney of man by the evil spirit was followed (as its remedy, and doubtless its only possible remedy) by the divine Incarnation. Now it is surely remarkable that, at nearly the same period, each of these combinations of a strange element with human nature (the evil excited into intenser activity by the immediate presence of the Perfection of Holiness impersonated in Christ) should have manifested itself in the subjects of Satan and the regenerate of

God, in visible proofs; the Satanic in the public extraordinary presence of evil spirits from hell; the divine in the public extraordinary presence of the Holy Spirit from heaven. As then the one was the real introduction of a distinct element into our nature, so likewise was the other; as the possession by demons was the outward and temporary exhibition of a secret and perpetual indwelling, so was the preternatural energy of the Spirit, in the apostolic age, a pledge and proof of His real inherency, as a spirit of perpetual guidance and abiding love. Views like these, of the true source of human vice and virtue since the fall, seem constantly discoverable in the early Church, and were conspicuously marked in the form of exorcism accompanying Baptism, a form whose Spirit is preserved in that interrogatory of our Ritual, which demands the solemn renunciation of the *devil* and his works. It is, further, highly probable that, since the era of the Incarnation of Christ, *both* the antagonist powers have increased in energy by nearly parallel augmentations. Undoubtedly this is the true reason why the greatest of revolutions in the spiritual history of man has as yet produced effects so disproportionate to its dignity and to prophetic promise. This supposition also illustrates a very remarkable fact, that the most fearful exhibitions of human vice, since the Christian era, have notoriously had relation to religion; being either internal corruptions or external assaults; either such terrific manifestations *within* the Church as the Roman Inquisition, or *against* it, as the infidel Revolution of the last century. It is obvious that this character and cast of human crime, which unbelievers exult in proclaiming to be peculiar to the times of the Christian dispensation, betrays a special concentration of the whole armament of darkness upon a single point, the victory and kingdom of Christ. And thus, if the stability of the Church be an evidence on the one hand, its misfortunes are scarcely less an evidence on the other!

On the whole, then, and to conclude this part of the subject, whether we regard the divine presence of Christ Himself as necessarily requiring the agency of the Spirit, or the equally divine presence of that Holy Spirit in person as the gift of Christ, and in Him the hidden source of every godly motion in man, we can see, upon large and general grounds, that we are warranted in joyfully recognizing a double blessing appropriate to our Christian calling; we can see that He who said "I will not leave you comfortless, *I will come to you,*" and a little after "the Comforter whom *I will send* unto you shall testify of me," has truly fulfilled both promises,—the promise of coming and the promise of sending; we can see that the Third Person of the blessed Trinity is no superfluous agent in this work of preparatory salvation, but hath His office distinct, His credentials authentic, His work in the Church permanent as evil itself, because to it permanently counteractive, and more permanent than evil, because eternally surviving as the inward principle of the life of glory, when the powers of evil shall have been finally destroyed.

III. Upon the third division of our general subject, little time is now left to speak. A very few remarks must suffice for the present. As the text has invited us to consider the propriety of the government of the Church by an invisible head, and the propriety of the agency of the Holy Spirit, as Paraclete, in conducting the work, so now we have, for our brief contemplation, the propriety of the departure as the condition of the gift: "*If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.*"

It is clear that our Lord here speaks of His *ascension* to the Father, as the departure which was necessarily to precede the advent of the Comforter. Some difficulty, however, intervenes, when we remember a solemn consignment of the Holy Ghost, which appears to have occurred previous to the exaltation of our Lord. The "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" of John xx. 22, seems to have been a

pledge of the gift to come, designed for the purpose of referring it visibly to *Christ as its source*; and, at all events, had its principal relation to the transmission of spiritual *authority*, as appears evident from the context. Indeed from the absence, which the Evangelist notes, of one of the Apostles during this interview, we may collect that no internal endowment was here communicated, as our Lord would scarcely select, for the bestowal of an inward blessing, common to all His missionaries, an occasion when "they were" *not* "all with one accord in one place;" while the absence of a member would not affect the force of an emblematic signification, either of a blessing to come, or of authority appertaining to the apostolic character. In Luke xxiv. 49, he speaks in the present, yet transfers the purport to the future: "Behold, I *send* the promise of my Father upon you: but *tarry ye* in the city of Jerusalem, *until ye* be endued with power from on high." Yet I think it beautifully observable (as marking the inevitable connection between Christ's triumph, *in all its degrees*, and the spiritual prosperity of His people) that the enlightenment seems to have faintly begun on the very day of His Resurrection; the twilight is already visible of the noontide to come. "Did not our *hearts burn within us*, while he talked with us by the way?" said the two travellers to Emmaus. The same day at eve He was among the eleven, and He "*opened their understandings*, that they might understand the Scriptures." Yet, to evince that the fulness of the endowment was not yet come, we find that at His appearance in Galilee (probably His eighth recorded manifestation) "some doubted;" and though during the forty days of His resurrection life He spoke, as St Luke tells us, "of things pertaining to the kingdom of God," yet, even as He was about to ascend, thoughts were uttered that betrayed how much of earth still lingered in their conceptions of that kingdom: "They asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to *Israel*?"

He rose, and, in the attitude of blessing, vanished from their sight; and even then it is scarcely fanciful to say we seem to discover another stage of spiritual progress, as if the heart already rose as its centre of divine attraction drew it with itself towards heaven: "They returned to Jerusalem *with great joy*, and were continually in the temple *praising and blessing God.*" But when the gift,—the long promised, the transcendent gift,—itself appeared, how sudden, how ineffably glorious is the change! The momentous day is come and past, and then for the outburst not of light only but of *love!* It is not that the fishermen of Galilee are calmly solving the problem of man;—it is not that Peter, who just now denied, in abject terror, a persecuted master, stands forth the majestic teacher of a world, and announces, through a vista of tears and blood, the true character of that very fact with which not many days before he had trembled to avow himself remotely connected: "Jesus, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledg^e of God, *ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*" it is not here I love to read the Spirit of the ascended Saviour, though this is surely wonderful. Deeper and holier is the wonder with which the Christian eye beholds the "Comforter" of all ages, the abiding Spirit of peace and love, the Paraclete of the heart, revealed in the simple narrative that follows, and that almost eclipses the miraculous speech of an Apostle with the life of three thousand brethren: "And all that believed had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and *parted them to all men as every man had need!*"

The *true* nature or ultimate ground of the connexion which subsisted between the Ascension of Christ into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit to enrich the Church, is, of course, to us quite incomprehensible. The economy of the spiritual world being as certainly regulated by immutable laws of divine wisdom as that of the world

of sensible experience, we may conceive that one event as necessary a pre-condition to the other, as the members of any physical sequence whatever. And when we remember the limits of our knowledge in the latter case, we need not be much surprised at our ignorance in the former. In both alike we can but observe the facts, and compare them with others that resemble or seem to resemble; both alike, and both equally, are bottomed in mystery. To observe similarities and harmonies in truths themselves mysterious, is, therefore, legitimate, or physical science itself is not legitimate. Observe, then, how some of these spiritual representations seem to wear the same expression, as if different embodyings of one common fundamental idea.

No one, whose inmost spirit has been busy with the New Testament, can fail to be aware, that there is everywhere a profound community, or even identity, of nature, intimated, between the heavenly world itself, and a state of spiritual-mindedness on earth, altogether transcending the mere notion of recompense or sequel. It is as if heaven itself was already, though faintly, realized in the soul; and that some rather accidental than essential obstacle delayed its consummation; as if the sanctified spirit were *there*, but, from a temporary defect of vision, could not see or enjoy it. A local and bodily change is, indeed, announced, but in terms so vague as to baffle all conjecture as to its real nature or amount; while it is everywhere so inwoven with a spiritual element, as to give a manifest predominance to the latter, and that latter not *generically* distinguishable from the principle of present holiness. Now if a connection so intimate do subsist between the two departments of the great empire of grace, which yet are separated, and the one to the other subordinate, it seems highly consistent, to say no more, that *the particular mode* of connection now contemplated should be found to obtain; that the ground or principle of the one should emanate directly from the other; that that seed should be issued originally from heaven,

which is to flower here as heaven's image, and to bear its immortal fruits in heaven's own climate; that the perfect should impregnate the imperfect unto the fulness of its own perfection; that Christ, our mediator, representative, and head, should, in the celestial state of being, and in it only, be capacitated to obtain that celestial element, which, urged downwards, was to pervade, and, by its upward tendency, to elevate, His earthly body. But again, among the glimpses of the divine economy that we gain in revelation, we seem to observe that the mysterious friend of man is represented as in everything *preparing* the way for the progress of His Church, from stage to stage of its course, until at length it have touched the very throne, on which it shall behold Him already seated. It is the appropriate function of the "Captain of Salvation" to be ever in the front rank of the march of suffering and of glory; of the army of the cross, to cover the ground that He has left. The point under consideration is visibly accordant with the spirit of this law. Christ, having reached His goal, and not till then, bequeaths to His followers the graces that invested His own earthly course; the ascending Elijah leaves His mantle behind Him. It is only an extension of the same principle, that, the declared office of the Holy Spirit being to complete the image of Christ in every faithful follower, by effecting in this world a spiritual death and resurrection and ascension,—a point attested in every apostolic epistle,—the image could not be stamped until the reality had been wholly accomplished; the divine artist could not fitly descend to make the copy, before the entire original had been provided. The sacred writers, again, represent a connection between these great events, of another kind; the Holy Spirit was the fruit of a victory, and dispensed as the gift of triumph; it ought not, then, to be given, till the triumph was consummated by the entrance into glory; it could not be given till the victory was publicly evidenced by the appearance of the living sacrifice,—priest and victor,

—in the presence of the expectant Father; the enlargement of the kingdom *following* naturally and immediately on the recognized defeat of the power of evil, by the principle of righteousness incarnate in Christ. They speak, too, though briefly and dimly, of a *double* work of advocacy, of a “high priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us,” of a “spirit interceding on our behalf with unutterable groanings;” and these, perhaps, must rightly belong to *distinct* spheres of being, holding their offices in the worlds of happiness and of trial respectively, and in the very distinction substantially uniting them. All these things, exhibiting, in various aspects, the cardinal truth of the text, “the Comforter comes not unless I depart,” are, doubtless, linked by an invisible bond, and resolve into some common idea which rests upon the very essence of the spiritual itself. They are all developments, in different forms, some nearer, some more remote, of that primary principle in the nature of things, which makes man capable of exaltation, through the exaltation of his nature in a divine representative. We cannot follow every step that conducts them to their last original, but we can see in them all the traces of a common descent; we catch them as fragmentary glimpses of one vast and harmonious system, whose remote connections and dependencies retreat from the eye into fathomless, impenetrable mystery.

But, if “secret things belong unto the Lord our God,” “those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever.” The great facts, with which I have engaged you, are equally true, however we explain their mutual bearing; we rejoice to know that the precious inheritance of faith is independent of the success of human speculation. It is certain that we live under a government all-seeing but unseen; that Christ is still among us in Himself and by His Spirit; that He disappeared from the eye, as the condition of descending with a new power into the heart. These things are the blessed objects of our faith and

hope, whether we can see or not see their reciprocal correspondences. It is certain that we possess our Lord, by a presence more real and more intimate than *he* enjoyed, who "lay in the bosom of Jesus." "Christ in us, the hope of glory," abides with power and vitality, such as His bodily presence never diffused. "He hath ascended up far above all heavens," but it is "that He might *fill all things.*" In designating His Church the "kingdom of heaven," and "of God," does He not Himself blend in one wondrous transit His passage into the highest heavens, and into this lower province of the same heavenly empire? That that mysterious translation was gradual is certain, from many expressions relating to it; for aught we can tell, it was accomplished not till the very day and hour of the Pentecostal visitation; so that at the same instant the glory of His presence might be filling the holy of holies, and spreading into this outward earthly sanctuary of the universal temple. It is because of this double immanence, that His very offices in heaven, intercessory and commemorative, are discharged by His Spirit in the Church, heaven's earthly province. Does He intercede with the Father on the throne of His glory? Even so is He present and busy with the two or three gathered in His name for prayer; even so does His Spirit intercede with unspoken groanings in the inmost heart of a suffering disciple. Does He make mention of His sacrifice, pleading on behalf of the guilty the obedience unto death? Even so the Spirit-guided Church, in the most solemn rite of all her services,—even so the Spirit-guided heart, in those hourly appeals that "make mention of His righteousness only." He is gone, but whither? Into the spiritual world? Into the spirits of His elect, then; for these are an integral portion of that world. He has abandoned a visible to assume an invisible throne. "It is expedient that He go away," for thus He is more blessedly, more divinely ours. The presence to sense has passed into the presence in spirit; but the presence *itself*

has never ceased, it has but deepened and closed around us. Reason (we have seen) denies not the possibility, revelation pronounces the certainty, of this mystical abiding,—the source of all spiritual blessings, the fundamental idea (as I believe) of all true Christian theology. Let it be our prayer, that the sense of such a gift may move us to watchfulness, purity, and godly fear; that we may feel ourselves holy things set apart for the uses of heaven, vessels of grace in the temple of our God. Since that temple was built on earth every sin became sacrilege. Who shall dare pollute the body that Christ has honored by His adoption? Who shall dare stain the soul that Christ glorifies with His presence? We Christians live in a new world, breathe a new air; other suns are those by which we see, other voices are those we hear. We dwell in Christ and Christ in us; this is *our* world, we ask none else; this is the substance of our hope here, as it is to be the substance of our heaven hereafter. Heed, then, my beloved brethren, earnestly heed, your high calling in Christ Jesus; glory in it, for angels cannot match it! Guard it, for it is the envy of demons! Live in it, for it is the source and principle of your immortality! Remember, with trembling joy remember, that Christ, in all the power and majesty of the Godhead, “is in you, if ye be not reprobates;”—“for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people!”

SERMON XXII.

THE FAITH THAT COMETH BY HEARING.

(Preached for the National Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in Ireland.)

How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?—ROMANS x. 14.

THERE is but one conceivable answer to this question in its large and general sense; in that sense which was pertinent to the Apostle's argument. Belief is impossible, where it is impossible to convey any knowledge of the subjects of belief; the body cannot digest without nutriment to engage its digestive functions; the mind cannot believe without facts and propositions to occupy its believing faculty. "Faith cometh," then, "by hearing," as truly as "hearing cometh by"—ariseth out of and pre-supposeth—"the word (or utterance) of God." The voice of God, the hearing of man, the consequent belief,—are the three necessarily successive links in the golden chain of revealed salvation. Sever the continuity of any two, and the electric spark cannot be transferred across the interval. From the throne of the Most High to the ear of man, from the ear to the heart,—is the luminous pathway of the Spirit. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?"

I speak this day, however, for an Institution, which is one of many that have ventured to solve this problem in its more limited and literal sense. The happy ingenuity

of benevolence has conquered a difficulty so great, that an Apostle employed it to symbolize an impossibility. Patient observation quickened by love has devised means to open a channel of natural communication between heaven and these desolate hearts. It has wrought out a system of supplementary organs for receiving and uttering blessings. The age of miracles being past, Christian charity, animating the intellect to new energies, has stepped in to occupy their place; and though no ardor of charity, no potency of science, can say, with the great Physician, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, come out of him!" they, nevertheless, can rob that spirit of his deadliest sting, abridge his gloomy prerogatives, and startle his silent empire with the triumphant message of salvation! Under the efficacy of this incomparable art, wonders are achieved, of whose ultimate value eternity alone shall tell the amount. The slumbering spirit, born in that slumber, awakes to unsuspected faculties. There is, as it were, a mental creation renewed. Originally capacitated for the skies, it starts into knowing itself immortal; the soul, so long a voiceless desert, is a desert no more, for lo! "the voice of one crying in that wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord! make straight in the desert a highway for our God!"

These are great achievements, they are an honor alike to the understanding and the heart of man. Executed in behalf of any class of sufferers, they would be interesting and admirable. Executed for the poor, the helpless, and the orphan, they are godlike. They present multiplied images of Him, who "went about doing good," and whose chosen objects of charity were those whom the world had rejected; whose divine specific was tendered to those to whom the resources of medical art were unable to offer any word of comfort, and cared not to offer it, if they could. Christianity is the foundation of these blessings not less truly because often circuitously and indirectly; and verifies, in innumerable ways of unsuspected influence over the

temporal state of man, that she has indeed, in proportion to her extension in the world, "the promise of the life *that now is*," as well as "of that which is to come." Even those who are Christians more in profession than principle, who, though within the walls of the Christian temple, worship only in its outer courts, cannot help owning a sympathy with the success of Christian labors. This divine visitant has softened the universal temper, and made benevolence attractive even to those who are little influenced by the peculiar motives she suggests. The light is *reflected* to numbers, who unhappily withdraw themselves from the cheering radiance of its directer beams. The very hem of Christ's garment had virtue; and a kind of derived and transitory blessedness seems to hover around even the remotest thing connected with that Church, which is His mystical and earthly body. When Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up," "His train filled the temple;" even now His image cannot be drawn down from heaven, and realized on earth in holiness, without filling its temporary habitation with a retinue of blessings. Men become habitually, and at length almost instinctively, benevolent, from the happy contagion of example. If they cannot sympathize with the heavenly, they can appreciate the earthly, aims of charity; and those who feel but a feeble interest in Christian enterprises, under their spiritual aspect, cannot but own the work a noble one, that labors to lighten man's heavy inheritance of *worldly* woe.

But the solemn duties of this place and occasion demand that I should present to you this matter mainly in its connection with the eternal world; and though I am not sanguine enough to expect it from all, I trust that in the congregation I now address I shall not be without numbers, who can feel such connections to be, practically, the most important of any. I trust that there are among you many, to whom the thankful acknowledgment of God's "inestimable love in the redemption of the world" is more than

the mechanical expression of the lips; who perpetually and profoundly feel, that the gift of Christ Jesus to sinners is the master mercy of God to man; that the surrender of a universe to our enjoyment could not have competed with the surrender of Himself its Author; nor the bestowal of ten thousand faculties unpossessed before, with as many thousand objects to engage them, rival the value of that unspeakable union by which He lifts us to share the throne of His glory, now in hope, and hereafter in reality. The weight of a Christian argument, heavy and oppressive to so many, by such is joyfully borne; for to them it is only a new excursion through their accustomed regions of thought; it is only telling over, in a new form of computation, their cherished treasures; it is only contemplating, under new effects of light and shadow, the old and well-known scenery of their dearest affections.

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” I shall dare to plead for these destitute applicants, but on grounds that reach the basis of all Gospel truth.

And perhaps I cannot better introduce the train of observation with which I would now engage you, than by relating, in simple phrase, how it originated.

At the period when I received the request of the Committee of this Institution, that I would undertake to represent their case to you this day, it happened that I had just finished the perusal of a work by one of the most influential thinkers on the Continent, in which it was attempted to be proved, and unquestionably argued with great plausibility, that our religion (in the form in which it is ordinarily understood and taught) was not only absolutely inefficient for the moral advancement of man, but in a high degree an obstacle to his real improvement. Not, indeed, because the religion was radically false, but because it was misunderstood by the great mass of its upholders. The true millennium of our faith, he maintains, can only be expected, in the gradual and at length total extraction of

everything mysterious from the system (by which is meant every one of its peculiarities), and the retention merely of its simple code of rigorous morality; this too to be preserved, not because revealed from heaven, but because coincident with the dictates of enlightened reason. This adversary, you perceive, is no philosophical voluptuary (such as our religion has had so often to encounter), no logical justifier of sensuality, who (in the words of the royal preacher) "seeks to give his heart unto wine, yet acquainting himself with wisdom." Not at all. Satan is now the "angel of light," and reasons as such. This author, the patriarch of rationalism, professes (and I believe sincerely, with the sincerity of profound self-deception) no object, but the moral benefit of mankind, and the purification of Christianity to its designed perfection. His views (which are those of a vast party on the Continent, and, I fear, an increasing party in Britain) are professedly directed not to degrade, but to elevate, not to relax, but tighten, the bonds of duty. And when he assails the historical foundations of our religion, and the very notion of a historical religion, as capable of universal dissemination or influence, he believes himself zealously laboring to remove a dangerous obstacle to that high and holy consummation.

I laid aside the volume, at the moment touched, it might be, more than I would to myself admit, by the boldness and power of its statements; and I took up the circular with its list of sixty desolate beings, many of them orphans of father and mother, all of them the orphans of nature, whom I was asked to present to your charity. Alas! I thought, if the representations of this party be true, if the Christianity we commonly preach be but the cumbrous vehicle of a few propositions, which are originally engraven upon the soul,—a figurative embellishment, that obscures, not illustrates, the bright simplicity of truth,—a scaffolding, meant only to assist in the structure of a moral character, and removed when that is completed,—a parable, scarcely

adapted for children, but certainly below the wants of men, —a superannuated machinery, useful enough in its day, but too unwieldy for modern refinement;—if this be so, how can I accept such an office as this, in the sense in which alone it should be accepted by a minister of the Gospel? How can I, if this be indeed the substance of that teaching of Christ, which I have been appointed to assist in perpetuating, labor to impress upon an auditory the propriety of assisting those who make it their business to intrude these needless mysteries upon the lonely minds of their unhappy pupils and victims? May not they, may not at least the enlightened few among such an auditory, reply, “Why persecute these poor children with profitless perplexities? What concern have they with the marvels of a strange Jewish story of near two thousand years ago? These are the luxuries of learned ease; they may suit the elaborate education of the wealthy; but as for these hapless beings, mutilated in half their faculties, the Gospel of nature is enough for them. *It* at least will not corrupt the purity of their virtue, by insinuating the base notion of reward; *it* will not make them the idolaters of a human God, in giving to their ideal picture of Deity the passions and the faculties of a man. At most they can know but little; waste not, then, their limited measure of capacity with the puzzling details of your marvellous history, as if the belief of a history *could* of itself be of any moral value, *could* make men wiser or better. Tell them, if you will have it so, of the dignity of their own nature, but cease all visionary rhapsodies as to anything above it!”

Brethren, I stoop to repeat these melancholy levities, because in substance they are the thoughts of a multitude among us, and such thoughts should be met. It may belong to the philosophizer of the schools to marshal them in the imposing array of system, but the principles are the same, whether issued from the desk of the sage (never more a dreamer than when he terms all beyond his own

horizon a dream), from the workshop of the socialist artisan of the manufacturing town, or from the lips of the refined and pensive egotist of fashionable life, who cannot endure to profess a creed that he must share with his tradesman. What else but the prevalence of such tenets, open or disguised, has unchristianized half our institutions, and threatens to unchristianize them all? What else but this habitual conviction of the unimportance of a revelation of the express will of God, of the "faith that cometh by hearing," has given almost national sanction to the audacious impiety of distinguishing, in the theory of religious education, between what is called "general" and "particular" religion; of daring to disunite, at human convenience the majestic integrity of the truth of God, and to determine what shall be offered by what will be received? What else has given currency to that dilute and inefficient morality, whose religious tendencies (when it acknowledges any) are directed, like those which Paul found at Athens, to an "unknown God;" the religion of men who dare to claim the notice of the Father unintroduced by the Son, and, justly struck blind by that "unapproachable light," wander in the dark, and record the gropings of their blindness for revelations of eternal truth. Nay, to come closer to ourselves, what but this makes it an awkwardness which (except in the professional teachers of the Gospel, and not always in them) is in the statutes of society almost inexcusable, to disturb the even flow of common conversation with a reference to the decisions of Him into whose name we have been baptized, and the signature of whose cross upon our foreheads no power of ours can erase? What, I repeat, produces or countenances all this, but the secret conviction, that the religious beliefs for which we are indebted to testimony are truths of inferior moment, if truths at all; that, originating in the world, men know not how or when they are now sustained, not by their own vigor, but the blind force of custom?

In opposition to these notions, in all their shades and degrees, I recall you to the spirit of the text. St Paul is arguing with a Jew, and states, with the candor of a patriot, the objections of this unhappy countryman, whom, while truth obliged him to condemn, his heart was yearning to rescue. He so answers as to admit the principle, but deny the fact assumed. The hesitating or obstinate Israelite is conceived to urge, that the Gospel of Jesus should have been abundantly made known in order to be received, and to this the Apostle assents, but replies that, in point of fact, the publication was already universal. St Paul admits (ver. 14, 15) that to make a revelation available to man it must be communicated to man; that to be saved men must have called upon the God of Salvation; that to call, they must have believed; to believe, they must have heard; to hear, they must have had a preacher; to preach, missionaries must have been authoritatively sent. I say he admits this consecutive order of Providence because, even supposing the passage introduced in the form of an objection, the answers ("but they have not all *obeyed* the Gospel," &c., and "but I say, Have they *not* heard?") manifestly concede the principle, on which the erroneous objection rests, and warrant us in receiving, as the sentiment of the inspired Apostle himself, the weighty proposition,—that "faith,"—the faith which, overcoming the world, justifies, and purifies, and saves,—"*cometh by hearing,*" cometh in the way of communication from man to man, as distinguished from any natural reflective enlightenment; while that "*hearing cometh by the word of God,*" ariseth out of an express revelation uttered from heaven, in contrast to every system, device, or imagination, of unassisted human reason. These are the principles you must be prepared fully and cordially to espouse,—to fortify in the reason, to cherish in the heart, if, in difficult times, beset by superstition on the one hand, by practical infidelity on the other,

you would vindicate against every assailant the precious privileges of adoring faith.

In order, then, to contribute (as a man may) towards furnishing you with this panoply of God, let me ask you to join me, for a few minutes, in weighing the value of these ordinary objections against the Gospel, as a superfluous intruder upon a self-sufficing world. I again remind you that I speak not now of the unblushing sensualist, or the public God-despiser. I refer to better men, though men mistaken as to a large and influential, though scattered party, who, professing to be guided by reason, can find no place in their reason for evangelical truth.

Now, you will generally find, that these opponents of the "faith by hearing" are accustomed to speak highly of two general sources of enlightenment, which they boast to be universal as man, and, therefore, as invested with nature's catholicity, alone calculated to be the religion of the world. The topics are themselves susceptible of a high order of eloquence, and, taking advantage of this capability, they enlarge in seductive strains on the impartial equity of that Supreme Dispenser, who, by a revelation co-extensive with nature, has made Himself known alike to every mind capable of conceiving Him; and treat with unsparing severity a miserable band of interested bigots, who have conspired to cloud the effulgence, and narrow the measure, of His mercies. The sources to which they love to refer are often so hidden in a blaze of eloquent description, and often so highly adorned with assumptions, borrowed from the very religion they oppose, that it is not easy to trace them: ultimately, however, they are found to resolve into the prospect of creation without us, and the light of conscience within. A word on both, considered as teachers of divine truth; not to exhaust a subject which is boundless, but to fix in your recollection one or two cardinal ideas.

I. As regards the former,—its *universality and perpetuity*, as a disclosure of Deity to mankind, are bitterly contrasted

with the partiality and exclusiveness of the Christian system. If God were to interfere at all, they maintain, it would be by some *universal* agency, simple, general, and obvious, as the laws of His visible creation. They smile at the notion of God's greatest exhibition of His will to man being acted upon the reduced theatre of a petty province, and made dependent on the chances of human testimony. "In the moral as in the physical world," exclaims the leader of the sentimental school of Deism, "it is ever on a great scale, and by simple means, that Deity operates." But what if we retort, that it is *those very laws of nature* "on a great scale,"—those very "simple means,"—that have caused God to be forgotten? Not justly, we admit; for they *ought* eminently to have convinced men of His presence and power; but what of that? We are not now speaking of argumentative propriety, but of actual fact; not of man as he ought to be, but of man as he is. And it is an undeniable fact, that it is the permanence and uniformity of the natural laws of the creation that have beguiled men into speculative, and, still more, into practical atheism; that it is the very perfection of the laws which has hidden the legislator. The hand that God has constructed so wondrously can write, "There is no God;" let it be smit with sudden paralysis, and the notion of an intervening Avenger will arise:—nay, let us at any time behold some strange unique in any of the departments of experience, and it startles our habitual slumber. That is to say,—as long as the work is *perfect*, we recognize no worker; but the moment it becomes deficient (the very thing which ought logically to produce the doubt), we begin to conceive and admit his reality. The more apparently capricious the works of nature, the more they resemble man's; and the more they remind us of direct agency analogous to the human. Now if this be so, could it be expected that, to produce an acknowledgment of His being and attributes, the Deity would continue to employ

the same medium of regular and ordinary laws, the same vast and uniform processes in the physical and moral world, which in all ages have tended (such the miserable subjection of man to an unreasoning imagination) to render His agency suspected by some, and practically forgotten by the many? To make Himself felt He must *disturb* his laws; in other words, He must perform or permit "miracles." But then He must likewise exhibit them *sparingly*, as, if they continued to appear on assignable principles of stated recurrence, and in definite cycles,—nay, if they appeared *frequently*, though unfixedly,—they would enter, or seem to enter, into the procession of the laws of nature, and thus lose their proper use and character. What follows? It follows that miracles cannot be presented to every successive age, far less to each individual person; they must, then, be presented only to some *particular age or ages*, and to some particular personal witnesses. But we have seen that they ought to be publicly and continually *known*; therefore (there being but one way of transmitting past events to present times), revealed religion and the knowledge of God, which we have seen is only thus to be practically and influentially attained, must be made dependent upon human *testimony*. There is no step of this deduction which might not be made by a man who had never heard of any actual revelation having been given to man; it is purposely built upon the simplest principles of our common nature. But to the believer in the Gospel message, how powerfully do the hundred voices of history echo the truth of these views! History proclaims (and the sound of her testimony shatters in an instant the airy structures of mere speculation) that, in point of fact, God never *has* been in any form acknowledged by the mass of mankind, except under the supposition of a direct interposition, whether true or false; that he never has been rightly or decorously worshipped by the same mass of men, until a true revelation, handed down by, and believed on, testimony, did that

for the world, which the whole array of the "natural laws," the "simple means," the harmony of the world, and the glorious spectacle of the starry heavens, never effected in a single nation of the earth,—never thoroughly and constantly effected, perhaps, in a single mind, since the fall of Adam! We are accused of evading arguments from *reason*; this seems to me to amount to something not unlike *demonstration*, that a traditional revelation, built on testimony transmitted from man to man,—that is, of a Bible and sermon religion, far from being improbable (as the impugners of an "historical creed" so eloquently insist), is actually the form of religion imperatively demanded by the *very structure of human nature*.

So much for the boasted efficacy of the prospect of nature, or of interferences vast and simple and continuous as her laws, to win the minds of men to recognize their God. Thus true is it, that, if the Psalmist could say of "the heavens declaring the glory of God," that "their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world," our Apostle could, with a more profound and touching truth, apply (as in the chapter before us, ver. 18) the expressions to *the public delivery of a revealed Gospel*; to that which has aroused a world, slumbering amid the majestic uniformity of the natural laws, and beguiled into dreaming (as men are ever prone to do) that what is habitual explains itself and is because it is,—has aroused such a world, I say, to know at length that these things exist, not because they could not have been otherwise, but because they are willed to be thus, that, each instant, they are dependent upon the uncontrolled fiat of One, who is distinct from them, and before them, and above them. Men ever cling to the nearest object; in the law they lose the law-giver; or, what is more irrational, make a lawgiver *of* the law, and deify the world. It is as when the prophet beheld that wondrous vision by the river Chebar,—the winged creatures, and the coals of fire, and the lightning,—the vivid

energies of nature; "wheels within wheels," that marvelously seem to move themselves, for "the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels;" wings whose noise was "like the noise of great waters," yea, even "*as the voice of the Almighty*;" deity, in all its power, seeming embodied and expressed in the living mechanism. But does the prophet pause at this stage? does *he* merge the Creator in the creation, or confound life derived with life essential? Nay,—for "above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of *a throne*, and upon the likeness of a throne was the likeness as the appearance of *A MAN*" (foreshadowing the incarnate Son) "alone upon it. . . . This was the appearance of the likeness OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD. And when I saw *IT* I fell upon my face." All till then was wonderful, but nothing till then to be adored!

II. But the depreciators of revelation, and the refiners who would evaporate its spirit, and those among our men of the world, who for variety sometimes assume an enthusiasm for virtue,—refer us (and with peculiar frequency of late years) to *another* source of guidance and security. This is the proud imperative of conscience; the authority, which each rational being carries within his breast, the all-sufficient rule of right, universal as man, and authoritative as God, whose image and superscription it bears. Christian priests, they tell us, are leagued to degrade the austere purity of this perfect law by a host of suspicious tenets, contrived to ease alarmed consciences, and to increase the general dependence on themselves by magnifying their ready remedies. This indeed touches the honor of the Gospel, this aims to wound the vitals of the truth we preach. The Gospel, by the simple dignity of her presence, can rebuke the scoffer and the voluptuary; to be taunted with treachery by the stern advocate of virtue, himself often unconsciously indebted to her for the principles he lives on, is a trial more startling. But it is the trial of the Founder:

“Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, *which did eat of my bread*, hath lifted up his heel against me.”

You will not expect, that I can now enter into this branch of our subject at any length proportionate to its importance, that I can now undertake to expose all the feebleness, and unwind all the sophistries, of these declaimers. As before, —remembering how small a portion of pulpit addresses is usually carried beyond the walls of a church,—I confine myself to a single and simple practical view. I surrender everything which the most exacting adversary can demand; I demand nothing which the most unblushing sophist can deny. As the advocate of the “faith that cometh by hearing,” I concede every high attribution that celebrates the dignity of the law of which he speaks, and that enforces the propriety of urging its performance. In doing so I affirm no more than “the volume of the book,” which proclaims that “blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord;” that “His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and His law the truth:”—I say no more for that law than my Master, who died a voluntary martyr to its justice. So far as that law is engraven upon the soul, you will do well to deepen and refresh the characters; so far as that inward revelation shines, you are bound unceasingly to trim its lamp, to purify the moral atmosphere around it, to maintain and heighten the blessed illumination. You will do well to follow it, it is your duty to follow it,—but *can* you?

I am not speaking now of *original* sin, or *inherited* frailty; not because irrelative to the point, but because demanding a sort of proof distinct from the simple appeal to *experience*, on which I would rest this question, of the value of Gospel preaching in relation to the law of conscience. I take man as he is, man as you see and know him to be. It is the ruinous error of speculatists, that they make themselves the measure of the human race, and generalize motives and feelings which cannot go beyond the door of the study. I

speak of the man of the fields and the market-place, the man of affection, and passion, and prejudice,—the being whom, if few can discern in themselves, each can accurately perceive his neighbor to be.

In what state, then, does the teacher (whether he be moral only, or evangelical also) find this being, who is to be the subject of his labors? He finds him the creature of a mass of surrounding and constitutional influences, that have hardened into settled habits; and the stern reasoners I oppose would be the first to allow, that these influences are mostly for *evil*. The point is, to reclaim him to *the law* he has abandoned, or never clearly known. Our austere instructor, who accuses the Gospel of deadening the sense of guilt approaches his degraded and dejected fellow-mortal. He impresses the essential impropriety of moral aberrations; he depicts, in majestic though colorless outlines, the awful dignity of that inward unconditional law, by which the free will of man binds itself; he explains with great accuracy that important principle, by which repeated evil becomes inveterate, and its results are perpetuated; he rises higher still, and names, with reverential mysteriousness, that Being, who, though transcending all the compass of thought, may be conceived to will man's obedience to a law, thus essentially and universally implanted.

His remedy is administered, but with what success? Alas! is it necessary for me to enlarge upon the inefficacy of such restoratives? The victim of folly listens with approbation, perhaps with momentary enthusiasm; he thinks of the dignity of human nature, and makes an effort or two to meet the vast idea; but there is a power in habitual depravity, which no cold injunction of reason has privilege to disturb;—you know it, if you have ever surveyed your own lives and hearts. The spell returns, the waters subside into their accustomed channel, the man is what the lessons of a life have made him, with, perhaps, the added bitterness

of despair, to paralyze yet more fatally the energies of his spirit.

Do I say, that the Gospel must succeed with such a man? No, I do not ask miracles. But I do say that it adopts the only course which carries a chance of succeeding to arouse, restore, and fix him. Supernatural causes apart (which I purposely omit, because their reality is questioned by such adversaries), man can be swayed only by the principles of his own constitution; the poison and the antidote both grow *there*. Whence, then, shall we draw the magic, that is to charm this lethargy away? You have the whole arsenal of human nature before you to choose from; does it hold one weapon that can meet this antagonist? Surely you will not hesitate in the choice. All experience cries aloud, —Fly to the *affections*! What? and are *they* infallible for this mighty enterprise of restoration? No, for there is no human principle whose operation is absolutely invariable; but we do not warn the drowning man to neglect seizing the plank, which alone can support him amid the howling waters, because he *may* still perish though he grasp it! We may fail to enkindle them, they may fail to stimulate; but it is still certain, that we have here a *purchase* upon the human soul, such as no other class of principles ever gave, or can give, till man is no longer man.

Here, then, is the Gospel system in a word, here is that in which it overpasses every rival remedy, here is the charm by which it works its exclusive wonders:—*it brings the AFFECTIONS to reinforce the CONSCIENCE*. Is this to debase the dignity of virtue? It is, as truly as when the virtuous father teaches his wayward child to love virtue, by winning him to love his teacher! Is this to debase the majesty of the law,—to unveil the adorable benevolence of Him who is its living impersonation? Is it a weakness to keep the law through love of Him who gave the law? Proud and cruel mockery, which freezes to despair, on pretence of hardening to fortitude; which forbids the sick to be healed

on any terms but those which the healthy alone could use, and rejects a remedy, because it *is* remedial; which would delude us to starve in the midst of bounty, because, forsooth, it is unmanly to be dependent on food,—to perish of hunger rather than condescend to eat the bread of heaven!

But you will not require to be told, that He, who best knew our nature, might best be trusted to repair it. Well do you know, that when the most imposing efforts of human wisdom shall have been dismissed as illusory phantoms, cold and pompous insults to men's misery,—every corner of our land shall still supply a teaching, rich in a wisdom that none ever received in heart and soul, and felt not the throbbings of a new life within him. And what is the nature of this marvellous, this transforming message? A story, my brethren, a simple story; such as a child will feel and weep over; such as a sage of seventy winters cannot fathom. It tells of a law, holy as that eternal heart from which it sprang; it paints the portrait of the righteousness consummate, which images that law in the life; it celebrates the triumph of the moral conquest that makes the enfranchised conscience sovereign of the man. Yet this were no more than others could, in their measure, rival. But oh! a tale, more touching than all this solemn strain, is its exclusive privilege to unfold. It speaks,—it alone can speak,—of One, whose purity, too perfect to brook one unatoned sin in the vast universe of His creation, was accompanied by a *love* too tender to endure that one pang should continue to exist, for which His own high wisdom would permit a remedy; of a love, which drew the living Author of the law from His transcendent abode into our narrow nature, that He might quench the lightnings of His own avenging justice in streams of His own human blood. It tells of that inexpressible attachment, of which all human relationships (for it names them all) are too weak to be the faintest shadows; of a Creator, who is father and brother and husband of His

redeemed;—and by all the insults of His humiliated life, by His depised poverty, and His accumulated wrongs, by a sight which made the angels tremble and weep, though,—mystery of unfathomed ingratitude!—men, its objects, can slumber as they listen, or wake to scoff,—by the groans of Gethsemane and its bloody sweat, by the nails and the thorns of Calvary, by the last dark tortues of an expiring God,—it prays us to love Him in return! This may fail to move,—alas! too well do we know that it *can* fail; but it is certain that this appeal to the grateful affections is the legitimate path to the great object of renovation, that it is a justifiable path, that it is a practicable path, that, if it fail, no other, that men have ever devised, can offer a chance of success!

If these remarks be warranted, even these, simple and brief as they are, the cause is finished. It cannot, without obstinate cavil, be controverted, that the faith of hearing accomplishes what every system of natural enlightenment has left unremedied; the universe without, and the monitor within, are proclaimed, by the experience of ages, unequal to this tremendous charge; a *testified history of divine love* must alone convert mankind. I boldly challenge every man's observation to confirm this reasoning. Genuine faith in the revealed character of Jehovah is indeed rare; but, in proportion as it spreads, the renewal to holiness spreads too, co-existent and co-extensive. The drunkard, the voluptuary, the man of envy, of ambition, of avarice, resigns the hoarded, hardened depravity of a life; the desperate are taught to hope, and by hope stimulated to exertions by themselves undreamed of; and I hesitate not to affirm, that, amid failures innumerable from all the opposing influences of human corruption, wonders *are*, through the compass of the professing Church of Christ, wrought, on any single Sunday, by preaching the life and death of Jesus, which exceed in number, in degree, and in permanence, all the moral transformations from habitual

vice to *genuine* virtue, ever by any other means affected since the fall of man.

This may suffice for the present. If it leaves much unsaid, it leaves you the more to think of; and I believe that thoughts, which rise as the natural growth of our own minds, strike their roots deeper and more enduringly than the transplanted exotics of other intellects. Many of you may, indeed, be little habituated to reflection upon the grounds and reasons of a faith whose origin in your own minds is lost in the remoteness of infancy! but among the thoughts that, even to the least reflective, will gather in the train of such considerations as have engaged us this day, surely this is one, and not the least impressive because the simplest of all, that, if such be the value of a communicated revelation, it lies upon us, with all the weight of a tremendous obligation, that, within the compass of our power, no human soul shall remain unvisited by its light. And, truth to say, Christian men and women in our age are not slow to recognize the claim. If I came before you this day to plead the cause of some distant and benighted tribe of the human family, for whom the missionaries of the Gospel were supplicating their Christian brethren to furnish the means of enlightenment; if I had to tell of the wants of the taught, and the humble courage of the teachers,—of men who had forsaken the dearest ties of home and country to multiply the heirs of glory, and who rejoiced to be thought worthy thus to suffer; could I speak of wildernesses in some far clime, impenetrable to all but Christian love, untrodden save by those “feet beautiful on the mountains, that bring tidings of salvation;” had I to recount the *success* of such efforts, the sanguinary Indian falling at the feet of the meek preacher of the truth in Jesus, and beseeching him for more and yet more of those blessed sayings that made him so strangely happy,—the softer idolater of the Pacific strengthened to knowing himself, in knowing at length a pure and holy God;—had I to

plead for such a cause as this, I believe I should not plead in vain. Ah, brethren! trust me, the cause for which I do plead, if without this brilliant variety of interest, possesses an interest as deep or deeper, of its own. It is a lonelier country, a solitude more unbroken, that *these* missionaries have to penetrate, who would burst the mental torpor of him who cannot hear or speak. *Among us*, and in all outward indications on our level, breathing the air we breathe, and seeing the light we see, the region, nevertheless, that these poor exiles of nature inhabit, is separated from ours, by barriers wider than seas or mountains can interpose. The senses they retain are, in a manner, the very instruments of anguish, for these senses, sight especially, apprise them of their inferiority, and feed the anxious longing for that unknown something, which they are too well aware all around them possess, and they alone are condemned to desire. Nor could I ever witness one of these unfortunates, —the quick, restless eye, earnest as if sight alone would force its way to knowledge, and then the dull drooping relapse into vacant hopelessness,—without its bringing to my mind all the woes of literal banishment, and picturing to my thoughts some exile, born an alien from his own ancestral land, who loves to linger on the borders of a region he never must enter, who gazes fondly upon the dim outline of woods and mountains, his native inheritance, but his in vain, and strains his agonized fancy to conceive prospects he never must behold. But here the resemblance breaks. The banished wanderer has, at least, one prospect unchangeably his own. He can gaze upon the *heavens*, the all-embracing heavens, and recognize the same sun that quickens the soil of his forefathers. But, to our spiritual exile, no spiritual heaven is unveiled. To him in vain rises, to enlighten the world, that diviner orb, which a deaf-mute once designated as the “sun of eternity,” even the invisible God, “the brightness of the everlasting light;” no message of love has ever taught him the secrets of that

celestial home where the righteous shine "as stars for ever and ever." The world, to him, is a volume in an unknown language, which he sees but cannot construe, a cypher whose key is lost. He looks around him, and beholds the changes of events, night and day, seed-time and harvest, but he has not risen, he cannot rise, to that mighty inference, which enthrones in the centre of the universe the one Intelligence, all-creating, uncreate. The same Providence that sends man into the world naked, while it clothes the inferior animals, because it gives him alone *reason* to supply his want; which leaves him the most defenceless of the larger animals, slower than they, less organically acute, less muscularly strong, because it gives him *reason* to be his all-sufficient engine of defence; which thus makes him bodily the prey, mentally the lord, of the brute creation,—has also, in its wisdom, made reason itself depend on organic conveyances for its original materials; and the being without senses is a being without knowledge, either of this world or of any other. The deaf-mute has naturally no religion; experience has proved it, if it wanted proof; the instinct of imitation sometimes bids him kneel, but his worship is idolatrous, he adores the *stars*. Smile not in conscious superiority; half the world, the reasoning, hearing, speaking world, to this day does no more!

But I have detained you long; and yet I still linger round the subject, unwilling to leave anything unspoken, for those who cannot speak for themselves. No charity is like this, for all have hope but *its* objects. The blind holds out a visible signal of his distress; the poor mute may wander among us for weeks, and his misfortune be still unknown. Hence history shows us that his sorrows have ever been the *last* provided for by public charity. This institution (the first of its kind in Ireland) is but twenty-three years old, and yet the deaf and dumb of Ireland average 4000, and have done so long, while churches were thronged with worshippers, and religion swelling her tri-

umphs in the land. But never came the voice of peace to them, never to them was given the heaven-raised affection, the hope that vanquishes the grave; the heavenly dew that fell on every fleece left theirs dry; till the persevering benevolence of one good man had roused the public attention to this desert wilderness in the midst of our spiritual vineyard. But what avail the labors and sacrifices of unassisted charity? The institution rests with you. With you it now depends whether sixty helpless beings, now pressing for admission, shall be, *for ever*, rejected from this Institution, and from humanity; whether they shall pass through life silent, terrible monuments of the mysterious will of God,—no thought of heaven, or of glory, ever brightening that gloomy vacancy of soul,—fatherless, Redeemerless, spiritless, hopeless; whether, when that sad and silent life approaches its close, they shall lie, in speechless agony, unable to interpret their own woes, unknowing of the future; whether, when the dark crisis has passed, and, in awful ignorance, neglected by their fellow-Christians here, and unqualified for any position in God's spiritual world, they stand before the throne,—but I pause. God grant that, in that hour, a voice may not be given to the dumb to accuse the deeds of this day.

SERMON XXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK IN LIGHT AND LOVE.

(Preached for the Molyneux Asylum for Blind Females.)

If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.—1 JOHN i. 7.

THE great Evangelist, my brethren, whose language is at all times the most wonderful union of depth and simplicity the world has ever seen, has compressed into a few blessed words the whole mystery of Christian truth. It is, indeed, one inimitable mark of profound reality, that in the New Testament almost *every* sentence of doctrinal or practical importance may be perceived to bear its secret relation to an universal and presiding plan. There is nothing superfluous, nothing isolated; but there are *degrees* in even the excellencies of divine knowledge. In the firmament of revelation, "one star differeth from another star in glory;" and, assuredly, *this* declaration of peace and purity stands conspicuous among those glimpses of an inner and diviner splendor,—of an heaven within heaven,—which gleam through the veil of Scripture upon the people of God. The soul of man is but an exile in this ruined world; his affections yearn, even in their very degradation, for something better; yea, every capricious form of that degradation, its thousand petty ambitions, are but crippled struggles for a *something* above it; the pupil of the Spirit alone is taught where and how to seek it;—let but *such an one* possess even

this fragment of truth, and it almost suffices to be the chart that directs his course to glory!

But what an office it is, thus to stand among an assembly of eternal souls; and, disregarding the veil of flesh that hides us one from another, to speak,—spirit to spirit,—in the presence of the living God, and of all those between us and God, who, unseen by our eyes, may be privileged to mingle among the throng of men! What an office,—if we could but cast aside the blinding influences of habit,—to stand forth, an immortal among immortals, to proclaim a message whose reception is yet to fix an eternity! How it requires us to recall every instance we have ever witnessed, of the manner in which God perpetually suspends great things upon things *apparently* of small moment, to conceive it possible, that a time shall yet be present, when the course of endless ages shall not exhaust the effects (immediate or remote) of this single meeting; when year after year, yea, century after century, shall return but the melancholy echo of an abused or neglectful past, reverberated from all the unfathomed abysses of eternity; or shall prolong, in strains of triumph, the remembrance of some one blissful Sabbath when the grace of God was welcomed and harbored in the adoring soul!

I am to speak to you of that bond of love, which binds soul to soul in binding all to God; of that walk of light which assimilates us to Him who *is* light; and of the union which identifies these, in connecting them both with the purifying work of Christ. But you know that I am here this day for a temporal, no less then for an eternal purpose; that I am here to speak, not only on behalf of God, but of God's afflicted servants; and to summon you, as you yourselves value the holy privileges of the Christian life, to aid that work which perpetuates them among your fellow-creatures. But why divide these topics? Why "put asunder" those which "God hath joined together?" To preach the *truth* is the straightest road to preaching the *charity* of

the Gospel. To publish the message of love is essentially to infuse love! This Gospel story of ours is no mere register of surprising events, which men are to hear, and perhaps to credit, and coldly return to forget; it is no chronology of barren incidents, digested out of fragments of half-perished authors by the diligence of modern erudition;—it is a living and a life-giving story! It is not ancient only, nor modern only, but both, and of all time! It fills the amplitude of eternity; for its Author is one, who is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever!” It links us with Him who was before all worlds; and who will *be*, and be *ours*, when he shall have rebuked into annihilation the worlds His word summoned to exist! To preach Christ may, then, be to preach the facts of a history; but they are the facts of this hour, no less than of eighteen centuries ago. What He has done, He is doing; to show Him to you, the living impersonation of Almighty love, as He walked among us of old, is to show Him to you the same quickening Spirit of love, as He works among us now! And, therefore, to tell you Gospel truth is to do more than tell you truth; it is,—if the Spirit will,—to transform you into the *likeness* of Him who wrought that wondrous work, to shed His beams upon you as you come near to contemplate His glory, to act over again the story of Christ *in* every heart that beats and burns to hear it! If then this truth be a love-creating truth, which to believe is to imitate, I will, in God’s name, deliver this truth, and let it work among you the divine charity it exhibits!

1. The blessed Apostle declares himself commissioned to proclaim a “message” of transcendent importance; a message which he declares calculated to consummate the joy of all the believing people of God. Of his own qualifications there can be no doubt. He is no deviser of conjectural wisdom, no framer of untried theory. Thrice over he reiterates, within the compass of as many verses, that he speaks of “that which he has seen, and heard, and his hands

have handled." The *aim* of the message is no less momentous. It is to be the instrument of producing a blessing so surpassing all human anticipation, that even long familiarity cannot yet have deadened the emphasis of the phrase in any mind capable of thought,—it is to produce "a fellowship with the Father and the Son!" What then *is* this message thus solemnly introduced, thus earnestly enforced? "*This* is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you,—that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

2. It is manifest, then, that *this revelation of the divine excellency* is directly connected with the *mystical communion* of which he speaks; the one is, in some measure, the condition on which the other is suspended. But the connection becomes yet more distinct when we come to the passage before us. We there learn that this light, with which God himself is identified, becomes also the element in which His elect children breathe and move:—"If we *walk* in the light, as He *is* in the light:"—and we learn that the high communion or fellowship, before proposed as the prize and glory of the spiritual life, directly belongs to such a position. Nor that alone; but this very communion is now made to extend through the entire society of the regenerate ("we have fellowship *one with another*"),—to link them, each to each, as all are linked in heaven,—to entwine every member of every tribe of the faith in the same golden bands which bind them all to the Church on high, and the Church on high to them, and both to their common head, "the man Christ Jesus;" until the last link of the whole disappears from the view, lost in the central light that surrounds the "unapproachable" throne of God!

3. Thus, then, the Apostle, in these words of holy mystery, contemplates the Church of the Sanctified walking together under the radiance of a common light, which streams from the presence of God, and which, involving them all, *assimilates* them all. He sees them move, in holy

fear and yet holier hope, beneath the meridian blaze of the everlasting glory, receiving its rays, and, in the very community of the same gift, by the very force of a common investiture, enjoying blessed "*fellowship* one with another." The fair procession of the people of God passes calmly on before his gifted eyes; and each, in the luminous robe that vests him, wears the high insignia of a celestial adoption. Co-heirs of heaven, they know their brotherhood; walking in that light, which issues from no earthly sun, they feel it theirs alone, and recognize in each other the mystic fellowship it gives!

Ours, then, be it to ask,—and to dare to answer,—what is that fellowship, and what that light, which (by uniting this, with an easy inference from the preceding verse) are declared to involve each the other? How are these twin blessings thus wondrously interwoven, that where the one is present the other cannot be away?—that where the "light" is found, there is the communion inevitably established, and where the "communion" exists, there must be presupposed the light that produces, animates, and cheers it? Supposing the *facts* admitted, where is the *connection*?

First, we must resolve each into its proper origin, to contemplate each in its proper aspect.

The Apostle addresses Christians in their Christian character. He speaks, then, of a "fellowship" essentially Christian, and to which (we may fairly conclude him to imply) no other than the Christian believer is competent. The bonds that consolidate this union, then, are framed in heaven, and out of heavenly materials. Could this admit of doubt, it would be rendered unquestionable by the form of phrase adopted in the third verse, in which the mutual fellowship to which the Apostle invited his readers,—"*fellowship with us*,"—is, by a sudden transition, declared to be "*fellowship with the Father and the Son*:"—as if the ardent interpreter of heaven, content with a *glance* at the

subordinate blessing, were impatient to spring to the celestial principle of the whole. The communion here spoken of is, then, essentially *divine*; it exists in and through God alone; it is of each with each, because of all with Him. And, therefore, if you would learn its properties and characteristics, you must seek them in their fountain, where the human soul is alone with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Now that the *very same high relation* obtains in the other member of the comparison, the words themselves, of the passage, proclaim. They refer us, not as just now, mediately, but directly and primarily, to God. We are "to walk in the light *as He* is in the light." We are to design from God Himself. No dim reflection is to transcribe our God for us, that we may present the copy of a copy; we are to look straight to Him; and, faint and feeble as is at best our lowly image, it is an image still! The remove from the original may be infinite, but it is only *one* remove! "*As He* is, *so are we* in this world." In this great work of the Christian *life*, as in the work of the Christian *redemption*, no third term, distinct from either, is interpolated between God and man; no Arian sub-deity to distract our adoration, to intercept our vows, and seduce our loyalty from heaven. Alone in the unbroken solitude stand God and man, the Judge and the criminal; He that reconciles them both is not distinct from both, for He *is* both! Our passage, I repeat, points full to *God*, as sole object of devotion, sole model of imitation; but remember also, it *can* point to Him only as we can know Him. A consideration of momentous import to those who would undeify our human manifestation of God. For when, on the one hand, we are perpetually summoned to make God our everlasting example, to be "perfect *as He* is perfect," to "forgive *as He* has forgiven," to "love *as He* has loved," or, as here, "to walk in light *as He* is in light,"—all phrases which suppose us to apprehend and know Him, for who can imitate what

he can *not* apprehend?—when we are told, even more directly, that man, “made in the *image of God*,” is capable of being restored to the “image of Him that created him,”—that “the pure in heart shall *see God*,”—that “in *His* light we are to *see light*,”—that “*His face* we are to seek;” and yet are, on the other hand, warned, that He is essentially invisible, that He “dwells in a light no man may approach, that “no man hath seen God at any time,” or “can see His face and live,”—whither shall we fly for refuge in this perplexity, or how conciliate this contrariety? How, but in that “God manifested,” who has brought near to us the God unapproachable; who (in another sense than the Apostle’s) has taught us to “endure as *seeing the invisible*;” who, while that mysterious embodying of the Eternal that was wont to commune with Moses, declares that none shall see His face and live, not only makes life compatible with, but the true life dependent on, seeing *Him* (“Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved!”);—and who, in this character only, could be set forth as *Himself* the very model which *God* exclusively is made everywhere else. I pass not the passage before us. Are we to “walk in the light as He is in the light,”—copyists of *God* who dwells there? Count a few verses further, and the same immutable sentiment meets you again; but another personage (“who is *not* another”) has glided unseen into the picture, and become the object in the foreground. “He that saith he abideth in *Him* (*Christ*,—who is also ‘the true light’) ought himself also so to *walk even as He walked*” (ii. 6).

We have seen, then, that both the terms of this declaration,—the walk of light and the fellowship of the saints,—lead us forth (and with nearly equal directness) out of the world and into God. In Him they terminate, blend, and coincide! The walk in light is the earthly image of the supernal light; the “fellowship one with another” resolves into “the fellowship with the Father and the

Son." So far we have traced them to their common home in the bosom of the Eternal, but even *there* we may, with reverent eyes, dare to behold their mutual relations; still contemplating the heavenly harmony, that the Apostle proclaims to link together this *light* divine and that *divine communion*. So shall we yet more nearly apprehend that these are two forms of one eternal truth: on the one hand, that "God is light," and, on the other, that we who glory in that light are "*partakers*" (Peter and John in their originals use the same word, *κοινωνοι*) "in the fellowship of the divine nature."

The Christian verity has taught us how to contemplate God. It has unfolded to us the truth above all reach of reason,—that in the Unity of the divine substance is a Trinity of the divine manifestations; and it has instructed us, when we would reflect upon that wondrous essence which caused and sustains the universe,—the Life of all Life and Soul of all Souls,—to regard it as mysteriously threefold,—as parting into three streams from one eternal source, which (stooping to our capacities, relationships, and language) it has styled the Father, Son, and Spirit. Of what these mighty personages are, *in their own nature*, it declares nothing, for no revelation can communicate what no created faculty can apprehend. But it tells us, and largely, that which alone it imports that we should know; it tells of their relation to *us*, of the distinctness of their offices, and of our corresponding duties. It declares what blessings *descend* from them, what answering tribute should *rise* from us. To exhibit this great interchange it employs every variety of language and of imagery; and, as it were, summons the whole creation to symbolize the commerce of God and man. Sometimes we are allied as the master and his servants, sometimes as the monarch and his subjects, sometimes,—still more endearingly,—as the father is bound to his children, sometimes, adopting yet tenderer terms, it is the affianced of a divine husband with an es-

poused Church. Thus, and in numberless similar images, the connection is viewed under a variety of special aspects and analogies, bringing with them their special instruction as to the tempers and duties they respectively demand; such as, doubtless, you have often heard largely expounded and illustrated from this place. These are all *particular* and detached representations. But if that *wider* principle of connection be affirmed, into which they all resolve, images yet *more general and comprehensive* must be sought to express the fact and the ground of our intercourse at once with the whole undivided Deity, and with each Person in its essence. And of all which inspiration has deigned to employ for this high function, scarcely any is more usual,—none, certainly, as we shall presently see, more expressive,—than emerges in the passage which connects us with Heaven by declaring that *we walk in THE LIGHT as God is in THE LIGHT*.

Now “our fellowship is with the *Father* and the *Son*,” to which St Paul expressly, and all the divine writers implicitly, add “the fellowship of the *Holy Ghost*.” If, then, our fellowship with Deity be thus distinguished into separate communions, each having its own grounds and offices of intercourse; and if (as the Apostle tells you) this threefold communion be inseparably interwoven with the “walk of light” which imitates a God who “is light,” we may naturally expect that that celestial lustre which represents the whole Godhead, shall itself be separable into significancies, in some measure corresponding to the divine personages whom the Godhead embraces. Thus shall our threefold communion be met and answered by a threefold “light.” Observe, then, the very record of inspiration, which declares that God Himself is light, has imaged forth by the *same* term all the choicest attributes of God in His relations to us; and most eminently those very attributes, on which we are accustomed to reflect when we would bring before our minds the *distinctive* excellencies and

blessings of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. No accidental coincidence is this! It lies in the deep dispositions of that wisdom which framed the Scriptures as it framed a world!

I will say, then, that all the significations of that divine light, which in Scripture is emblematic of the attributes of God, seem ultimately resolvable *into three* cardinal excellencies, holiness, happiness, and knowledge. When His "*judgments*" are declared to be "as the light" (Hos. vi. 5), and His children to be "children of light," and the livery of His servants the "armor of light," you recognize a type of His essential holiness. When He is termed "the light and *salvation*" of His people, the bestower of "light to the righteous" and "*gladness* to the upright,"—you see Him the source of their happiness, whether in consolation on earth or glory in heaven;—when, lastly, it is said that "the entrance of His *words* giveth light," even "the light of the *knowledge* of the glory of God," and that by that light "all is made *manifest*," you then behold this type of the blended perfections of God employed *eminently* to symbolize His knowledge and his truth.

You will have now anticipated me when I seem to discover, in these three fundamental attributes and gifts of God, the appropriate characteristics of the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity; when I see them all, indeed in All,—for how should *They* be without a mutual communication of the blessedness of each? But when I still imagine I can behold, in the Father (the Author of all law) the God of all righteousness; in the Son (whose "joy was set before him") the God of all happiness; in the Spirit (that "searcheth the deep things") the God of all truth; or when, regarding the same attributes as they *act upon us*, I worship in the Father (eminently) the "just, yet justifying" imputer of our righteousness; in the Son, the victorious obtainer of our happiness; in the Spirit, the liberal bestower of our wisdom;—surely it is no baseless vision thus

(following the revelation which tells us that they have the fellowship of the Trinity who walk in the light of the Trinity) to fix our trembling eyes upon that central light of Godhead, to trace it, as it parts into its three golden beams of holiness, of happiness, and of wisdom, all bearing its *name*, because co-eternal emanations of God Himself, who bears it; and thus to catch some glimpse of the mighty truth contained in the text,—that to live within the verge of this illumination is to hold communion with the essential excellencies of the triune God.

Once more,—and briefly,—if the fellowship of the Three in One thus answer to the threefold light in which They dwell, *how*, specially, does it correspond to *each*? For nothing short of this will consummate the Apostle's implied parallel. But to those who are at all familiar with the revelation of the Bible, or with the inner revelation of Christian experience, this is but the problem of a moment. Surely, if the Father be eminently the light of holiness, and *our* acceptor as a holy people in Jesus, he who walks in *that* light communes with him by the link of holiness, by the cordial adoption of that "righteousness of God, which is witnessed by the Law and prophets," by profound *submission* to that will which is the executive, that reason which is in itself the legislative council of the universe. Surely, if the Son be eminently the light of celestial peace and its dispenser, we commune with him as dwellers in *that* light, by *trust* boundless and unfeigned in that victor, who, having once and for ever foiled His adversary in the deadly struggle of Gethsemane and Calvary, will never forsake the Church He redeemed; by *gratitude* for blessings undeserved, by *joy* for blessings assured and everlasting; by that sterner task of which another Apostle speaks, the fellowship of *His sufferings* being made conformable to His death (Phil. iii. 10). If, lastly, in the Spirit, we worship the light of eternal truth, and its revealer,—*when* are we found in *that* light, and when blending in mystic communion with Him

who abides there,—but when with a sanctified reason we apply our whole mind to receive and understand His revealings; when, raising at his call the faculties which He alone can furnish with fitting objects, we issue gladly forth from the world of shadows, and meet Him, where he awaits us, in the world of immutable reality? Alas! how can he whose feeble voice would now summon you thither, speak of this high work of a sanctified understanding, without an earnest prayer, that at this hour there may be those before him, who find in these searchings after the deep things of God, the glorious privilege of their enlightened reason; who consecrate the intellect no less than the heart in this holy service; who know that, though the affections are indeed the great scene of the spiritual life, yet the affections themselves rest upon motive, and motive implies knowledge; and who, therefore, worshipping God not only “with all their heart,” but “with all their *mind*,” enjoy “the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” as in the participation of those other blessings of which we have spoken so eminently, by humbly walking,—as He dwells,—in the light of His own consummate *truth*!

Have we not now seen that this earthly career of *light* involves the whole Christian life, as directed to each member of the ever-blessed Trinity? Have we not seen its reward in that *communion* which itself fulfils,—as far as our lowly humanity can be fondly said to fulfil,—the evangelical law of God? But the mystery is not yet complete. Another vista of the divine symmetry of the Gospel opens here! The fulfilling of the law is (as you know) declared to be found in “*love*,”—the whole communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,—as well as (still more manifestly) the mutual communion of the brethren of Christ,—is comprehended, then, in that single word; a brief word to utter, but whose purport, we are promised, eternity shall not exhaust! You may have marvelled that, when numbering the graces that enrich the fellowship of a soul with heaven, I spoke

not of this master-grace;—that in counting over each pearl of price,—joy, and gratitude, and faith, and holy resignation—I named not this:—it was not neglected but deferred! It *now* appears that the walk of light must *blend* with the walk of love; they must unite in their *origin*, they must commingle in their *progress*. Need I remind you how aptly this is attested? For their *origin*,—know you not, that the same blessed Epistle which declares that “God is light,” declares also that “God is *love*,” and thus identifies the fountains of the Christian life? For their *progress*, and to establish the coincidence of the two in all their successive manifestations in the Christian heart, listen to the further declarations of the same portion of inspiration, and mark how evidently they are framed so as to force on us the conviction of this lovely harmony. On the one hand, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie;” on the other, “He that saith he is in the light, and *hateth his brother*, is in darkness” (1 John ii. 9). On the one hand, “If we walk in the light we have fellowship;” on the other, “He that *loveth his brother* abideth in the light” (ii. 10). On the one hand, “This is the message we deliver unto you, that God is light;” on the other, “this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we *should love one another*” (iii. 11). Thus, beginning from their sameness in the very heart of God;—carried out in their sameness (and separated only in our thoughts) through all the story of the Christian life; prolonged in their sameness into eternity,—for as “love never faileth,” so that light is said to be an “everlasting light,”—they blend, they mingle, they are lost in each other! and it is only the feeble vision of our imperfect reason that fails to grasp the identity of the two, and to see that light and love are one below,—light and love one in heaven,—light and love, the issuings of the same nature above all natures, which, mingling holiness, happiness, and truth in the unity of one light, manifests them all in the unity of one love!

And when the Apostle speaks of that light in which God everlastingly dwells, does he omit (in direct connection) to speak of that *love* which God has everlastingly manifested? Nay, for he adds that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” The utterance of God’s light (for such was Christ,—“the brightness of the Father’s glory,” “the true light,” the “light of the world”) was *one* with the utterance of His love (for “herein is love, that God loved us, and sent *His Son*”); as they *shall* be one for eternity. Nor does the COMMUNION, which results (as we have so largely seen) from the participation of this light, rest less surely upon the same basis. Well do you know (for often have you been taught) that it is only as washed in that blood, alike for acceptance and for purification, that Christians, as such, can be one with God, or one with each other;—that it is the crimson uniform of the cross that unites the soldiers of the living God under one bond of fellowship; and that, were they robbed of that badge of their affiliation, they would be instantly broken and disbanded. But thus saved, thus united, thus cleansed from all sin, thus entitled to all glory,—they are one now, and one for ever: he is greater than Omnipotence who can rend that tie; that “marriage was made in heaven!” Alone,—it was in the depths of eternity,—stood Christ and His Church before the altar of that divine espousal; none was witness but the Father of glory and the Spirit of life, when the vow was plighted and the contract sealed; but all heaven shall yet be witness, when the redeemed Church shall vindicate the fidelity of the Church’s Redeemer; when she shall “come up from the wilderness” of this barren world, “leaning on her beloved,” and by him be *publicly* invested with those privileges of her rank which are hers now, but hers in silence, secrecy, and sorrow! Then shall the “fellowship of one with another,” and of all with God, be indeed complete; and that wondrous prayer be fulfilled, in which (as one who ties and doubles a knot) the Saviour,

by returning on His words, seems purposely to have sought to express the infolded closeness of that maze of love in which the "children of light,"—having within them the abiding of *the Spirit*,—are one with the *Father* and the *Son*:—"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.—That they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one!"

Were I, my brethren, your stated minister, and the minister of those on whose behalf I have this day to speak, I could not often address you as I have now done;—for oh! is it not melancholy to think, is it not peculiarly afflicting to think, that, to those who are *thus* visited, a large portion of the word of God itself becomes necessarily *unintelligible*? We have seen that there are no phrases on which the sacred writers delight so constantly to dwell, when they would express the excellencies of God, as those derived from the external light. It is (as it were) consecrated into being the material representative and index of God in His inanimate creation; and the Christian, who loves to hallow everything that is seen, and heard, and felt, by associations of spiritual truth, is permitted to find, in that which reveals all else, a faint revelation of that ineffable Supreme, whom "no man hath seen or can see." "Jehovah,"—cries the great prophet, rapt in vision of the future Church,— "shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory!" But when to these poor sufferers the preacher of salvation approaches with promises like these, he but deepens the mystery he would explain! When he tells them, as the Apostle has done (Eph. v. 13), that "all things are *made manifest by the light*," no experience of theirs can echo his words, "the darkness comprehendeth it not;" when he tells them, "they were darkness before, but are now light in the Lord," their hearts may witness (God grant they *may* witness!) his truth; but his words can convey but a dim and shadowy import. Nay, the very

notion of those prophetic *visions*, which make so bright an element in the magnificent treasury of revelation, is to them absolutely unattainable. Our hearts may burn within us, as we follow Isaiah and John through that heaven which is to be our inheritance; but not only is that "inheritance of the saints *in light*" to them inconceivable, but even the very terms that express the prophet's exercise of his gift are terms to which they can attach no direct significance. "I saw," declares one of these Inspired, "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Alas! in the first two words the reader has gone beyond his sightless hearer. Sadly, indeed, may *they* echo the old diviner's phrase, "I *shall* see him,—but *not now!*"

But the great poet of Christianity,—himself thus afflicted,—had faith to pray from out of the depth of his deprivation:

"So much the rather, thou, celestial light,
Shine *inward!* and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, *there* plant eyes!"

And it is with unspeakable pleasure that I can communicate to you, on the authority of the chaplains of this Institution, that the Spirit of the God, who is no respecter of persons, has known how to carry on His inward work without this outward aid; and that it is a positive fact, that among all those young disciples, whom it is the chaplain's office to catechise on stated days,—many of them the children of the wealthy, in whom every sense is taught its duty in the work of acquiring knowledge,—none are comparable, for knowledge of the word of life, and apparent feeling of its inestimable value, to the *youthful blind* of this institution. Insomuch, that the examiner declares himself habituated, when an answer is missed by all the rest of his class, to refer with confidence to his blind catechumens, and to hear, uttered forth from the depth of their lonely

world, responses that evince that God, now as ever, "can lead the blind by a way they have not known!"

And oh! it is a lonely and a mysterious world, that in which these destitute beings are situated! If, in the supernatural world of revelation, much that is spoken must be to them incomprehensible, how much more are they incapacitated from a knowledge of the world of *nature*! Of all those qualities, which to us make the loveliest distinctions of things, they can never be cognizant. They hear, just as we would listen to fables of another planet, of the splendors of morn, the maturer effulgence of noon, the pensive beauty of sunset: they know that differences, which only by laborious and careful examination they can detect, are instantaneously evident to their more favored companions; they know that there is around them some wondrous system of things, which makes this world more rich with meaning, more ample in its materials for the exercise of the faculties, than they have ever been able to imagine; they know,—though how it should be they cannot conceive,—that the eye can behold in the face the inmost soul, and the heavens themselves,—the infinite heavens,—be not too remote for human knowledge. And yet, from all this they are shut out, reft of the brightest element in the earthly heritage of humanity, and exiles in the common country of their race! And this, surely, is fraught with melancholy, even apart from every *spiritual* consideration. For oh! "we live not by bread alone," in any sense of these holy words; it is not by the mere gratification of sensual appetite that the human soul can, even in its corruption, be said to *live*! Ties more ethereal bind even the godless to something better than an animal existence; and when the very unbeliever walks abroad, though he sees not a Father in the framer of the mighty all,—for none can know *the Father*, but he to whom the Son reveals Him,—yet in the very majesty of nature is ineffaceably transcribed the majesty of God,—the whole world is itself a Bible of His power and

wisdom! In the feeling of these things, in the silent aspirations they prompt and nourish, lies (more than we readily deem) the life of even the heart untaught in Christ. Knowing how thoughts of this kind (in all their varieties) make, even to the natural reason, the essence of all that, to a being formed as man is, can merit the name of life, how can we refuse our sympathy to *those* to whom the richest channel of this knowledge is denied?—who cannot know in nature anything beyond its least expressive elements, who, as they creep along their uncertain way, can only learn by the poor medium of testimony, that there spreads above them a distance one inch beyond that to which their uplifted hands can reach; and who are forced to *discover*, in minute and isolated fragments, that grand comprehensive *whole* of beauty, with which God has decorated his natural world into a palace that seems, at times, the fit abode not for men but angels!

And yet to have once possessed the faculty, and then irrecoverably to have lost it, is, in some respects, even more deeply melancholy. Of that which we have never known, we know not half the value, and for it we feel no *proportionate* regret; but to have been once on a level with the species in gifts and attainments, and then to have sunk hopelessly below it; to have once been admitted as a spectator into the magnificent theatre of the universe, and then obliged for ever to hoard the faint reports of *memory* for all that enraptured of old; to feel the poor portraits of recollection fading into dimmer obscurity; and not merely the bright and beautiful world of former days, whose “life was light,” deadened into a dark and shapeless mass; but, what is bitterer far, the features, on which affliction had once rested as though it could never weary of gazing, now recalled with painful effort, and a perplexity, which the sufferer would vainly strive to disguise;—this, surely, is a trial to human patience; this, surely, if compassion (which is God’s loveliest virtue towards man) be eminently Chris-

tian, ought to awake your pity, and make your charity this day prompt, liberal, and decisive. For we, beloved, who have walked, long and wearily many of us, in darkness and the shadow of death, know what blindness may be, and feel its *every* form besiege our hearts, with a peculiar claim. Oh! if the soul of every man, Christian or Gentile, has burned within him as he read that sublime imperative of the Supreme Majesty in the work of creation, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light!" *who* will not soften with pity as he sees before him the memorial of a sadder, a sterner order of His mysterious providence, "God said,"—said to each of these our poor, protectorless sisters,—“Let there be darkness, and there was darkness!”

In the community of such a misfortune, distinctions, whether of sex or age, seem to be lost. A blow so awful levels all the differences on which the coloring of ordinary life depends. Yet, if we might select a case pre-eminent in the depth and intensity of the misfortune, should we not find it in the *poor* and in the *female*? Reduced even to mendicancy, the *man* thus afflicted can struggle for a precarious livelihood, and often finds in even his misfortune a touching claim to public compassion. But the *female* can ill resort to such chances. Her peculiar labors, requiring delicacy and precision, are such as can never be carried on without a special training adapted for her new and unfortunate position. There *is* indeed one lovely art, which seems the peculiar heritage of the blind, in which both sexes are equally qualified to excel,—that art of *music*, to which, as exercised in this place, you have all listened with so much pleasure, glorifying, I trust, the goodness of that God, who, in depriving the eye of sight, has yet left the ear its hearing, and the lip its power to speak His praise! Organ after organ may depart,—the eye may cease to recognize colors, the ear to detect the distinctions of sound, the tongue to speak, the very touch to feel,—but God's Holy Spirit can still animate the heart, independent of all

this extraneous machinery, as *He Himself* would continue to exist, though all the worlds around him were to vanish into chaos!

And you, my afflicted sisters, who have now heard so much of your own misfortune, to you what shall I say for *consolation*? What,—but that your very misfortune is itself a lesson, an example, an experience? The loss of that which reveals the world is, in a manner, a separation from the world itself; it is an anticipation of that which death will complete. What is *death* itself but the successive extinction of all those organs by which we hold communion with the scene around us? The cessation of *any* sense is, then, a marked step in our descent to the grave; the failure of the noblest of the senses is eminently so. Providence has already done that for you, which human hands must have to do for all around you! The hour shall yet come to every being here, when other hands must close the glazed eye which nature has sealed for *you*; and that “valley of the shadow” be entered, which you habitually tread! But the day *shall* come, when the partiality of nature shall be lost in the equality of grace; when the defective organ shall be strengthened to meet a brighter beam;—when you, sightless sisters of affliction! and we, and all, shall stand before the “great white throne;” nor shall the clouded vision veil from your eyes Him, of whom it is said that “every eye shall see Him!” Whether the bodily eye can behold or not, the spiritual eye can apprehend that divine radiance which exists where “there is no light of the sun, neither of the moon; for the glory of *God* doth lighten it, and the *Lamb* is the light thereof.” But the bodily eye *shall* behold, for in that better and spiritual body shall be no imperfection; these “priests unto God and the Father” shall not be less complete, in every perceptive organ, than that legal priesthood of old was bound to be! In how deep a sense will they praise Him “who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,” and made

us partakers of "an inheritance of light!" How then shall they feel with a *double* force that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright!" And now grant, O God! that under the ministration of Thy blessed word, maintained this day by the charity of thy Church, they may, in this world, so learn, and so know, the lineaments of Thy Christ, that in the world to come they may not fail to recognize Him; that it may be with them as with the favored disciples near Emmaus,—“Their eyes were opened, and THEY KNEW HIM!”

S E R M O N X X I V .

PRIMITIVE CHURCH PRINCIPLES NOT INCONSISTENT WITH UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.¹

Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament ; not of the letter, but of the spirit.—2 CORINTHIANS iii. 6.

IN these words, my brethren, the great Apostle affirms two most important truths. Vindicating his own position, but including, doubtless, with himself, all who share his ministry, he asserts at once its authority and its object; the commission by which it is empowered to act, and the essential quality of the religion it is constituted to diffuse. "God hath made us able ministers,"—such is the *source* of our qualification ; "ministers not of the letter, but of the spirit,"—such is the nature of the *doctrine* we have to declare.

St Paul did not perceive any inconsistency between this humble confidence in divine help guaranteed to a divinely-appointed ministry, and the purely spiritual character of the religion for which alone that ministry existed. On the contrary, he often seems to consider the constitution of such an office to have been itself the masterwork of the Spirit.² But others have been unable to connect these

¹ Preached at the Visitation of the united dioceses of Derry and Raphoe, on Thursday, September 22nd, 1842; and published at the request of the Bishop and Clergy.

² Acts xiii. 2; xx. 28. Rom. xii. 6, 7. 1 Cor. xii. 11, 28. Eph. iv. 7, 8, 11.

things. It has been conceived, that every argument which dares to deduce the authority of the minister directly from his Master tends inevitably to ecclesiastical despotism ; or, at least, that the only form in which such views can be safely held is that which permits all who at their own pleasure or that of others assume the name, to stand upon the same level of commissioned power and privilege. And, unfortunately, the just claims of the primitive ministry of the Church, when defended at all, have been too often defended with a harshness and rigor of unqualified assumption, which, while it may have attached more closely a few resolute adherents, has certainly alarmed and repelled a far greater number.

Gladly would I, my reverend brethren, were I to follow my own preferences in selecting a subject for our common consideration, turn from these troubled themes to those points of ordinary practical importance upon which no doubt or disagreement could be anticipated. But I am well aware that, on an occasion like the present, it is not the preferences of the preacher, but the circumstances of the times and the immediate interests of his auditory, that must determine his subject. The great lines of practical duty are manifest; for the most part, whatever our God in His righteousness has made most necessary, in His mercy He has made most unambiguous. You will justly expect to be addressed, not so much upon that which engages us equally at all times, as upon that which engages us peculiarly at the present time; not so much upon the points of greatest general importance in the ministerial life, as upon some of those pressing questions of immediate perplexity, which we feel it not easy to solve upon our ordinary principles of action, and which make even the humblest and feeblest light valuable, because, emerging unexpectedly upon the Church, they find us without the guidance of habitual rules and settled experience.

I need scarcely observe that the subject to which I have

alluded has, of late years, assumed this distressing aspect. Our local position in this part of the empire has given it peculiar importance and difficulty. Situated as we are, in the midst of large bodies of excellent and able men who reject indeed our ministrations, yet whom we are bound to conciliate to the very last degree that involves no surrender of principle; the public mind around us agitated by unwarrantable representations of the Church's belief as to her ministry; and those whom we have undertaken to guide anxiously inquiring of us our real claims;—Romanists with some, if we do not rank every thing else above our office; Puritans with others, if we do not rank our office above every thing else; it is surely fitting that we should furnish ourselves with some definite principles on the question, capable of direct and *practical* application. When each of two hostile divisions makes a separate clause of our text its watchword, and the spirituality of our religion is marshalled against its authorized polity,—the polity asserted in a form that too often obscures or overlooks the spirituality,—it may be well to try if we cannot, with St Paul, rejoice to see and welcome both.

Did we not know by experience, how men can in practice unconsciously harmonize differences, which their theories proclaim absolutely irreconcilable, we might indeed well wonder how the supporters of views so opposed as those to which I have referred could continue members of the same ecclesiastical body. By *one* party it is openly professed, that the polity of the Church and ministry of Christ is entirely a matter of temporary, occasional, variable expediency; that all bodies and all individuals who believe in the name of Jesus are equally contemplated in His original charter, and equally realize His original design. By the *other* it is usually maintained with as resolute a conviction, that the one constitution of the Church and her ministry, being in every element essentially divine, forms the sole exclusive machinery of human

salvation; that to it alone the sanctifying graces of the Gospel are promised; and that there exists no ground in the New Testament for anticipating that they can ever travel out of the channel it affords for their transmission. The eager advocates of each of these views are so possessed with the absolute truth of the main principle for which they struggle, as to overlook the enormous difficulties that challenge them when they descend to the simple *facts* of the case; when the bold theory of the latitudinarian is met not only by the internal improbability of his supposition, but by the clear evidence of Scripture and apostolic antiquity; when the rigorous scheme of his opponent is encountered by the overwhelming evidence of daily experience, establishing, by the most decisive attestations, by proofs which, if we reject, we must reject all human reasoning on religion, that the purifying and saving graces of the Gospel are not limited as he would affirm, but extend through almost every community, in which the leading doctrines of the faith of Christ are preached.

When views thus contradictory and thus extreme are put forth; when it is certain they cannot both be strictly true; when both may be made in their degree plausible; and yet facts exist that seem inconsistent with either;—the most valuable service that can be rendered to the public mind is the work of *limitation*;—the attempt to show under what qualifications principles true in themselves ought to be accepted, so as to make them consistent with others of equal certainty. This is an humble task apparently; but the whole history of human knowledge has shown that it is far from being an easy one in reality. The most important steps in every part of moral science have consisted in this very adjustment of rival truths; it is much less difficult to see the force of a great principle than to see its limits.

My object, then, is to establish that just and strict views

of the original polity of the Church of Christ, and of our obligation to preserve and transmit that polity, are *theoretically* consistent with a full recognition of the fact of great and genuine piety existing in irregular and less happily constructed communities; of the consequent possibility and propriety of our *practically* sympathizing with many of their projects of benevolence, and of our cherishing a Christian and charitable affection for their godly members. And therefore, that the obligation of this latter duty, and the reality of the blessed and delightful fact on which it is founded (the existence of many of God's richest graces among them), furnish no legitimate argument against the exclusive claims of the primitive polity, or against the duty on us incumbent of stedfastly upholding it as alone representing the full design of the inspired Apostles of Jesus Christ. My wish is, to evince that *both* these things are scripturally consistent; and that their consistency is perfectly parallel with the ordinary operations of God in His kingdoms of providence and grace. And hence, to tranquillize the fears of those who conceive, either, that if they accept as obligatory the primitive system of the Church, they must avoid every form and degree of spiritual recognition toward those who have lost it; or, that since they cannot accept the extravagant theory which places the pious Presbyterian and Congregationalist on a level with the heathen, they must of necessity surrender all the exclusive claims of the ancient episcopal ministry.

I. The positions, then, which I consider that we, as the duly commissioned ministers of this Church, are justified in maintaining, are such as these:—

First,—the great general principle, that the apostleship of Jesus Christ is still and for ever, in the world; as really in all the substance of the office, as when it was held, under circumstantial differences of miraculous attestation, by Peter, and James, and John. That as, “breathing the

breath" of natural life into the first man, He gave him by a single act, a power thenceforward physically transmissive through the whole immense series of the human race; so (with evident allusion to that act) "breathing on *them*" the Holy Ghost, He conferred, once for all, a spiritual power analogously transmissive to innumerable spiritual successors. That when He to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth" promised to be "always, unto the end of the world," present with His eleven mortal Commissaries, He spake not to the men but to the Office, or to the men as the temporary symbols, representatives, and occupants of the Office. That it, therefore, becomes the same violation of His appointed order,—though not, from the absence of miraculous evidences, so visibly such,—to separate, under any pretext of sanctity, from this succession, without a palpable corruption of doctrine (which St Paul has pronounced adequate to justify separation from *himself* (Gal. i. 8)),—as it would have been for holy men, during the actual ministry of the Apostles, to have neglected all visible communion with *them*, under the pretext, however true and sincere, of sufficiently understanding the doctrine they taught, and practising the life they recommended.

Secondly,—that this general conception of a perpetual Apostolate, intimated as it clearly is in Scripture, and against which all the vulgar objections apply with precisely equal force to *any* ministerial transmission of the ministry, is manifestly confirmed by the *fact* of the organization of the apostolic Churches, both laity and ministers, under individual governors, exercising exclusive powers of ordination and spiritual superintendence even within the limits of the New Testament; by the universal admission in antiquity of the claims of this high Stewardship to have been the direct appointment of Him who "holdeth in His right hand the stars" which are "the Angels of the Churches" (Rev. i. 20; ii. 1); and by the very strong pre-

sumption, far more than sufficient to constitute a clear practical obligation, that *any* form of polity universally constituted at such a time was meant to be perpetual; it being obviously improbable, not to go into any more direct evidence, that the Apostles, everywhere insisting on the propriety of due obedience to spiritual directors, and themselves having habituated the Church to find in definite authority the main external bond of that unity they so urgently impressed, should yet, as they passed away, leave the Church of Christ without any *permanent* constitution, that is, should provide no fixed remedy against the dissolution of the polity of every Church in the world, every month of its existence, at the caprice of a majority.

To these points I merely allude; my immediate object assumes them as proved upon their proper evidence, and concerns only their consequences. I therefore proceed to observe,—

Thirdly,—That the divine and exclusive authority of this constitution is consistent with the strong *probability* that, where it should be lost, the mercy of God would not suffer that unhappy error to prevent the gift of His graces to those who sincerely sought them. This point contains the real essence of the whole controversy; and, therefore, to this I must request your special attention. I will not apologize for taxing that attention by something of a severe and systematic argument; for I am addressing an auditory which I should insult by supposing that it could desire anything else on such a subject.

II. 1. It is always dangerous to undertake to say what are means alone, and what are ends alone, in the ordinances of Providence; yet if we may in any case venture to do this, it is in the case of the Christian ministry, which is everywhere represented, as indeed the *name* itself implies, in the subordinate or instrumental character of a means instituted for certain divine purposes higher than itself,

namely, for individual and collective holiness.¹ The ministry as fixed by the Apostles is the instrumentality which Christ has organized for converting and guiding the world in things spiritual; and His divine law attaches a special blessing to its duly executed ministrations, whenever the course of the blessing is not interrupted by the negligence or the wilfulness of its designed objects. This is Christ's law of the ministry. But another law, equally certain, and of yet larger compass, attaches a general blessing to the act of sincere faith in the Gospel of Christ; a blessing which may indeed be *increased* by other means of grace, or altogether suspended if we *wilfully* neglect them; but which, nevertheless, supposing "an honest and good heart" in the receiver, is attached without express limitation to the cordial reception of divine truth, *simply as such*. Through whatever channel the knowledge arrive, we must still confess it "life eternal to KNOW the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;" and where that knowledge is *not complete* (as by the loss of important collateral doctrines) we cannot, either from the reason of the thing, or from the information of experience, deny it to be ordinarily effective for sanctification and salvation, *so far* as it is possessed. Nor can it, without a melancholy perversity, be maintained, either that the peculiar doctrines of which I am now treating (those which regard the Apostolic Constitution of the Church) are such *in themselves* that their absence deprives those which remain of all true sanctifying and saving power; or that the whole vast residue of divine truth is, by a *special* suspension of the covenant of grace, deprived of this efficacy in all cases where perfect church communion is lost; the latter supposition being as much opposed to experience as the former is to all just conceptions of the proportion and connections

¹ Matt. xx. 27, 28. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; ix. 19. 2 Cor. i. 24; iv. 5. Eph. iv. 12—16. 1 Pet. iv. 10.

of revealed doctrines. Nor indeed do I think that this ground can be fairly held by any one who is not prepared (in a very mistaken view of the reverence due to mystical and sacramental influences) to question the whole principle that divine *knowledge*, purely as such, is, when cordially received, made ordinarily efficacious to holiness and to salvation; a principle, to establish which from direct and indirect scriptural testimonies, would be to transcribe nearly the whole Bible. It seems, therefore, quite undeniable, that if any number of persons were to agree to set themselves apart for the purpose of offering that knowledge, or a principal portion of that knowledge, to mankind, we have strong scriptural grounds for anticipating, that that offer would be attended with results of saving benefit altogether irrespectively of any direct commission for the purpose. It is wrong to affirm that the hearers of such uncommissioned persons "must be left to the extraordinary mercies of God;" for there unquestionably is an ordinary dispensation, intimated without qualification, and fully interpreted by subsequent experience, which attaches divine influences to "the hearing of faith;" influences which *grow* in regular proportion to faith itself, from its weakest to its strongest intensity in the subject, from its smallest to its largest extension in the object of that fundamental grace, but which, in one degree or other, are invariably attached to it *as such*. This is a *transcendental* law (as the schoolmen would have termed it), with which none of inferior extent can rightly be conceived to interfere; but by which, on the other hand, no inferior law is contravened, or limited, or anywise disturbed. It not only can co-exist with the most rigorous obligations to the appointed ministry, but it actually *strengthens* the force of these obligations, and even strengthens them in virtue of its very *generality*; for *in proportion* to the extent and freeness of the mercy of God, ought to be the impulse carefully to search out, and scrupulously to fulfil, every one of His

ordinances. Nor, therefore, can this view (except by a gross abuse), lead to any indifference to positive institutions: it being quite certain that he who wilfully neglects the positive ordinances of God, on pretext of possessing sufficient holiness independent of them, does thereby infallibly prove the falsity of his own pretext.

2. This principle, that a strong obligation to a particular polity may co-exist with a general law of divine benevolence, might be exemplified largely: my limits will only permit of my noticing one or two instances, and these very transiently. The honest heathen, "doing by nature the things contained in the law,"—the Socrates or the Solon,—was, doubtless, not destitute of his measure of divine approbation; yet the Jew, and the heathen received into Jewish membership, even though he had brought with him all the largest lights of philosophic morality into that strict and rigorous system, were not the less imperatively obliged to a special code of beliefs and ordinances as their sole declared path of acceptable service. Again, among the Jews themselves, in our Saviour's age, perhaps the very most corrupt portion was the most precise in observances, the purest body the most irregular in its Judaism; nor can any one who knows how He hath set mercy above sacrifice doubt as to their relative estimation with God; yet who will deny that the Essene was unwarranted in presuming to neglect or undervalue what the Pharisee by unspirituality discredited? Such cases as these show the force of the principle as one of very general applicability in the divine government of the world. They are instances that the fact of divine aid and approbation visibly given to bodies renouncing the original constitution of the Church, is one which our experience of the ways of God might have taught us to anticipate; one at which we are bound to rejoice as a striking manifestation of the supremacy of the purely spiritual element in our religion, and the merey, victorious over all obstacles, of a God who "waiteth to be

gracious" to every sincere supplicant; but which does not form the shadow of a presumption against the exclusive authority, perpetual obligation, and specific blessedness of the primitive system of ministerial government and succession.

III. Another view of this important question, which is quite as simple, quite as strongly supported by the general analogy of divine dealings, and which leads to the same result, is that derived from what may be called the principle of accommodation. By this I mean the principle observable in God's merciful dispensations, of suiting Himself to the infirmities and errors of His creatures, by occasional variations of His stated laws, without any repeal of those laws themselves.

To begin from the highest ground. It is evident that all mercy is an *accommodation* of this kind; a suspension in special cases of the execution of the laws of rigorous justice, these laws still preserving their supreme authority, and being virtually acknowledged in the very gratitude that hails their apparent supersession. Consider next, that the great perpetual exercise of divine goodness consists in the bestowal of divine "grace;" the name of which on account of this very eminence, has become in a manner ambiguous in the New Testament, being applied equally to the mercy that gives and to the boon that is given. Now, the primary and ordinary end of grace is, doubtless, the support of unfallen beings through the universe, as it is usually supposed to have been, of our own race before the fall; and in its general collation it was made dependent for continuance on the thankful and upright *use* of it by the creature. Yet, while this law of grace is still preserved through the millions that adhere to God in all the regions of His creation; while in strictness it might legitimately be enforced on ourselves; we know that the law *has* been in our case specially widened, and we are thankful for the enlargement, as an act of conspicuous mercy in

the sudden accommodation of divine gifts to suit the case of a lost and ruined race. And the special accommodation has now become an enactment of divine goodness, as sure and ordinary as the original law. But we may proceed farther still. Under the accommodation the gift itself has actually become more ample and more precious. The Redemption achieved by Christ seems meant (through the connection of God and man in His person) to exalt the creature to a far higher *ultimate* position in creation than he would originally have possessed; while the peculiar embarrassments of a fallen being, struggling against inward frailty and outward temptation, give occasion for a larger and more constant measure of assistance from heaven in the *present* state. This, I need not remind you, is the spirit of those reasonings of St Paul in the fifth and the following chapters of his Epistle to the Romans; where he unfolds how the law of God, and the sin, of which, through the weakness of our flesh, it was the occasion, were themselves, in the vast and profound scheme of Providence, the means,—and the necessary means,—of evolving a far more wondrous exhibition of mercy; in order that “where sin abounded” grace might “superabound.” It may, indeed, be doubted whether the *goodness* of God could ever have been duly appreciated, if by the existence of sin it had not been led to assume the form of *mercy*; whether in a universe of simple absolute righteousness, it would not inevitably tend to appear an attribute acting by a kind of physical *necessity* of distributing happiness in proportion to virtue, and thus cease to excite any very definite or intense emotion of gratitude. It would seem that, at least to beings formed in our mould, the contemplation of an enemy voluntarily pardoned can alone render this attribute strongly prominent and characteristic; just as the sense of divine *wisdom* becomes deadened, when confined to mere results, without the perception of elaborate contrivance and difficulties circuitously overcome. The force of the smooth

current is not *created* by the obstacle, but it is manifested by it, measured by it, and might for ever remain unsuspected without it. This speculation might be carried much further; even, as I imagine, so far, as to show that for the very idea of goodness, as a *distinct* positive apprehension in the minds of created beings, some contrast of actual evil seems requisite; just as, probably, of all the animated beings in our solar system, those, if such there be, who dwell in the sun, have the least *distinct* idea of light, because they have no contrasted experience of actual darkness, and because merely possible privations, if even conceivable at all, can never impress but faintly. You may reflect whether such considerations, showing the apparent necessity of evil for all practical apprehension of good, do not afford some reason for the permission of its existence. But I must return to my immediate object. Notwithstanding, then, all this wonderful development of the resources of divine mercy, pre-supposing a fall from original righteousness, and arising solely out of it, no one, I suppose, will deny, either, that even the full and certain knowledge of the whole series of future blessings to spring from his sin, would not have, in the slightest degree, diminished Adam's obligation to obedience, and the criminality of his rebellion; or that, could the alternative be at this moment referred to ourselves, we should be bound, in simple submission to the divine law, to prefer that our race had never transgressed, and calmly to leave the rest to God. With this striking example impressed on your minds, and separating (as you may easily do) the principle involved in it from its details, consider, first,—is it unlikely that God should appoint a special organization of the means of grace in His Church? Secondly,—that when that organization had been more or less impaired, He should condescend to continue His gifts in a manner accommodated to the alteration? Thirdly,—that in some instances, the graces thus conferred should be even more precious and brilliant in

themselves and their results, than were always or often exhibited under the original arrangement? And, nevertheless, fourthly,—that the change out of which His measureless wisdom had framed such evidences of placability and mercy, should itself be a fall from a better state, a violation of declared law, a thing to be mourned, and repented, and remedied?

IV. 1. A modification of this same principle places in its proper light the objection (perhaps the most plausible of all) to the doctrine of a single fixed and universal form of church polity, so often drawn from the alleged *advantages* of religious dissent; in its tendency to urge rival bodies to watchfulness, in its provision for the diversity of human tempers, in its development of truth by the conflict of opinions. The fact here affirmed appears to me to be, in its limited degree, unquestionable; but it affords no real presumption against the doctrine it is employed to oppose. Indeed, though it could be proved that variance in the body of Christian believers was, in the enfeebled state of that body, not merely useful, but absolutely necessary to keep its energies alive, this unhappy fact would be no proof that it was not our individual duty to labor to recover the original ordinance of unity. For surely we need not pass beyond the very instance on which I have lately insisted, to see that, in God's dealings with man, laws emerge, in consequence of a fall from a prior and better state, which produce in the new and inferior state consequences allowable, valuable, even indispensable; and which, nevertheless, we cannot but earnestly desire to remove, in removing the condition that permits or necessitates them. In the unfallen state death was unknown; in the present constitution of the animate creation birth is not more necessary to its continuance than death; the play of its mechanism would be stopped as certainly if no man were to die as if no man were to be born. How, for this purpose, the tendency to war, the visitations of pestilence, are not without their pro-

vidential use, I need not urge; it is enough to say, that all that vast system of corrupt or imperfect motives which Scripture calls "the world" is itself a mass of these secondary laws of exquisite art, working in each other with precision the most subtle and exact, and all in their degree necessary for the maintenance of the whole scheme of human life as it stands; yet this it is which we, living in the midst of it, are called on to abhor, to forsake, and to reform. The provisions, then, in the new creation of the Church, as those in the old creation of nature, which our own degradation has made useful or necessary, have no claim of perpetuity beyond that degradation itself; the system of grace and the system of providence may be equally aided by stimulants which are foreign to their primary constitution; nor is the reality of such incidental motives in either Church or world a proof that the original design of God was not above them, beyond them, altogether independent of their mediation.

2. And as the alleged occasional advantages of separation are thus shown to be perfectly consistent with the divine purpose and constitution of universal church unity; so you will find the same mode of reasoning furnish sufficient answer to all those more daring forms of argument in which it is attempted to be shown,—not merely that variety of government has its advantages, but that uniformity, and more especially uniformity of episcopal control, carries in it an inherent and inevitable tendency to *corruption*, usurpation, and the ultimate formation of an ecclesiastical monarchy. It seems to be a law of our present imperfect state, that every divine gift must, more or less, suffer by entering it; coming from God, it yet comes *to* man; and in such hands the gift alters in the very process of using it. The "natural tendency" complained of is not in the constitution of the Church, but in the corruption of man; nor is the ordinary objection against the divine authority of this special Christian polity (that, naturally tending to a papal

supremacy, it cannot have been designed by Christ, unless *that* eventual transition was likewise in His design) at all more conclusive than it would be against the divine constitution of the Jewish, which “naturally,”—that is, from human pride, indolence, and impatience,—passed into a monarchy also. In each there was the criminal substitution of a visible for an invisible governor; the literal and the mystical Israel both murmured, “Nay, but a king shall reign over us; when the Lord their God was their king;”¹ even this very revolution was itself expressly anticipated in the provisions of the Mosaic Law;² and we know how the predicted change was, nevertheless, characterized as rebellion, and marked with the special resentment of heaven. The truth seems to be, that God tries His Church as He tries its individual members: by placing both in positions that bring *temptation*, by making the temptation *increase* in proportion to the crimes and wilfulness of both, and by making the sin of both involve its own *punishment*. Co-equal episcopacy afforded a natural temptation to partisanship and ambition; the criminal dissensions of the Church recommended the Papal expedient for enforcing union, and gave opportunity to the most powerful see to usurp a despotic arbitration: and I need not insist how fatally the desertion of the Apostolic Constitution has brought with it its own punishment in the consequent corruption, debasement and slavery of half the existing church of Christ. It would be unjust to the claims of God’s marvellous mercy, not to add, that here too (as in the former part of our subject) it has found opportunities for extracting benefits out of evil. The careful student of ecclesiastical history is not unable to see that, in the wretched circumstances of the times, even the Papal system had its occasional uses; the body of Christ, like the natural body, being permitted to possess a sort of *vis medicatrix*, by which its very diseases

¹ 1 Sam. xii. 12.

² Deut. xvii. 14.

produce results that tend in some degree to alleviate themselves.

On the whole, then, we have seen that it is quite possible to consider the Apostolic Constitution of the Church as the established dispensation of the means of grace, and to regard adherence to that constitution as a peremptory and perpetual duty;—and yet to recognize the reality of its occasional degradation; the independency of divine grace on its necessary instrumentality; the benefits that have been attained beyond its verge; and even the benefits that have been at times permitted to arise from opposing, and disputing, and suspending its legitimate claims.

V. 1. But it may probably be urged, that all these concessions are not sufficient, unless we admit within the circle of *the Church itself* the various forms of association which have been made the occasions of grace to believers in Christ; that is, unless we include within our conception of the Church every existing or possible social organization for the preaching of the Gospel. And it is supposed that, unless this admission be made, it will still be necessary to exclude many of the holiest disciples of Christ from that sole claim to eternal happiness which is founded in being members of His mystical body.

But there need not arise any very perplexing difficulty on this point. We are not forced, in order to save the pious Dissenter, to make his irregular society an integral portion of the mystical body of Christ; the mercy of God secures his salvation, when he is to be saved, on deeper grounds than this. If that mercy can give grace at all (as no man should dare deny) independently of the Apostolic Constitution, it surely can give the preliminary grace,—the source of all, and which all others presuppose,—of the mystical membership of Christ; and if to the all-searching eye of God this constitute that celestial ground of church-membership, of which visible sacraments are the earthly counterparts and the ordinary instruments, then assuredly

the same act of grace which made him one with Christ has spiritually incorporated him into the Church, with which holy Society he is thenceforth numbered, even though, in unconscious contradiction to the will of God, and doubtless to his own detriment, he unhappily lives without fulfilling its corresponding earthly conditions. It is the primary purpose of God, that all within His Church should be holy, that all holy men should be within His Church; the blessed design has been contravened in *both* respects; and the same difficulty, if there be any, arises equally from both. Millions within the Church are but nominally its members; thousands beyond it appear in the enjoyment of its real graces:—as the wicked within it are spiritually excluded from its real communion,¹ so the holy outside it are spiritually included in its circle; these special arrangements of God as to individual souls in no respect altering either the duty of men, or the nature of the Church itself, as the kingdom of Christ, and the sole appointed school of immortality. In a word, the same grace which, condescending to human infirmities, could make a man a believer in the Gospel in despite of his unwitting desertion of God's arrangements, can, doubtless, in the same despite, secretly enrol him in the list of the household of God along with the Church's baptized children; nor is there at all more difficulty in the one supposition than in the other.

2. But it is plain that this special favor to individuals in no respect necessarily extends to consecrate or authorize societies. We believe, and we rejoice to believe it of the former, because we see results which we know can only flow from the union of mystical membership with the divine Head; we have, I fear, no similar proof to justify

¹ The most respectable of even the Romish theologians have sanctioned this decision; and the *grounds* upon which they proceed are plainly applicable to the corresponding case of godly dissentients from the apostolic fellowship.

us in extending the principle to the latter. We certainly may believe that every single member of a schismatical congregation has been, by God's mercy, made a member of Christ, and in the same secret act (for the ideas are inseparably correlative) registered in heaven a member of the Church which is His body; and yet believe that that congregation is itself, as such, existing in direct opposition to His will, because in opposition to that blessed Society by which he originally purposed to dispense His graces, and because by that opposition delaying His further purpose, through the same Society, to bind in one brotherhood all the families of mankind. Surely there is nothing sophistical or illusory in the distinction. Surely it is conceivable that individuals may, by the grace of God, be enrolled in the number of Christ's elect people; that they may thus form a real portion of that flock on which His eye rests with peculiar affection; that, in his abounding mercy, they may live in the enjoyment of all the varied blessings which His Church was primarily constituted to diffuse,—“sitting together,” with its brightest saints, “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;” and be thus in the eye of God accounted true members of it in being members of Him;—and yet, that the system of polity and visible association to which they externally adhere may form no real portion of the primitive Church of Christ, may be incompatible with its original idea, and actually perilous to the spirit it was meant to generate and to foster. And this will hold, consistently with many suppositions commonly conceived to nullify it. As, for instance, even though (1) that very system were itself *overruled* to be the earthly instrument of their growth in holiness; or, (2) even though it were (as all provisions for preaching truth must in their degree be) in some respects inherently *adapted* for that instrumentality. It is even supposable (3) that the occasional workings and results of such a system may not be viewed without a certain measure of divine *approbation*; especially if they approximate to the

original plan, or tend in any degree to preserve its spirit. Or is it supposable (4) that these societies, when pure and exemplary, may be divinely regarded as *transitions* to a better and brighter state of future catholic union; or again (5) as temporary forms of association, in which some important principles may be embodied and *preserved* that would otherwise have run the chance of utter extinction in the world,—fastnesses where some high and holy truths have taken refuge for a time, while the City of God was itself given over to pollution, and the abomination of desolation was standing in the holy place. Nay, it is supposable (6) that the whole body of such systems, though human and unauthorized, may be found to form *designed members* in a vast scheme of divine moral government, of which the Church itself is as yet but a part, though the noblest part; or (7) that they may be discovered to have even advanced the spiritual progress of some natures *more* rapidly, *not* than the apostolic principle is capacitated in itself to do, but—than it would actually have succeeded in doing in certain unhappy conjunctures of times and circumstances. Not one of these admissions (some of which seem often confusedly alleged with this view) does in any respect disturb or weaken the distinction I have drawn.

3. But further, it must, I think be ruled,—that as all fixed government is in itself, as *such*, a blessing and divine; as decency and order in religious societies are themselves, as such, favored by heaven; we may not doubt that God approves of all religious constitutions as far preferable to the greater evils they prevent; though He disapprove not the less the desertion of His own Apostolic model. How *far* this blessing may extend; whether,—for I am perfectly willing to suggest a possibility which, being but a possibility, can in no degree affect the question of practical *duty*,—whether in cases of long-established order and great personal godliness, it ever can, or will, amount in the secret estimate of God to an ordinary sanction of the substituted

system, it would be extremely hazardous to presume arbitrarily to determine. It certainly seems not inherently impossible, nor from analogy wholly improbable, that it may; and in all such questions I believe it our truest wisdom, as it ought to be our highest happiness, to glorify God by hoping much from His exhaustless goodness. When our Lord was in that ship in the tempest, which all ages have agreed in employing as a type of His Church, St Mark alone of the Evangelists, as it were incidentally, observes,—“and there were also with Him other little ships.” Nothing more is said through the narration of these “*little ships*.” Yet they, doubtless, enjoyed a share in the blessing of calm obtained by the ship that bore Jesus Christ. I have sometimes thought that they picture vividly the fortunes of those societies that in these later ages have moved in the wake of the ancient Apostolic Church; that are with it forced to endure the storms of a world impartially hostile to every form of religious effort; and that are not without participating in the blessings of the holy presence abiding in that Church, as long as in sincerity of heart they endeavor to keep up with the Master in His course. Believe it, the warmest hopes and sympathies are here consistent with the most unswerving sense of duty; my purpose this day is attained if I have in any degree helped you to see how to combine them. Your duty to them and to yourselves once inflexibly fixed, I would even encourage every hope as to possible variations of the original scheme of divine government, which may tend to console your regret for honest separation, or to enkindle your sympathy with vital godliness wherever the sovereign grace of heaven may cause it to quicken. The law of God I dare to fix; His mercies I dare not limit: the commandment is “exceeding broad;” the grasp of love is broader still. He who before now tolerated and sanctified human suggestions in His polity, may in His own unrevealed counsels have vouchsafed

to do so here; be it our hope that He has, our prayer that He will, our resolution never to presume that He must.

4. Such are the principles and feelings with which, it seems to me, we ought to regard these pious worshippers, and the societies; often most valuable and godly communities, which they have organized for religious edification. Briefly,—I have admonished you to discriminate between the individual and the association;—to regard the latter as the instrument, doubtless, of much real benefit; and, as *such*, the rightful object of prayer, of hope, of sympathy; but yet as laboring under a perilous charge of needless secession from the Church of the apostolic inheritance, which must preclude any deeper tie:—to look on holiness,—clear, undoubted holiness,—in the individual, as, under all circumstances, an infallible mark of true incorporation into Christ; of the membership of His “assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven;” and of a virtual enrolment, in the estimate of our merciful God, among the baptized innocents of His correspondent earthly kingdom.

VI. You must not consider it strange that in deciding the important case of holy believers in Christ outside the pale of the Apostolic Society, we are left to the *inference*,—though, I think, a most certain inference,—which, in assuming their connection with Christ, concludes their virtual insertion into that Church which by the same mystical conjunction alone holds its real tenure of existence, and to which are “added daily such as are saved.” At a period antecedent, if not to all separation, at least to all separation of which any godly man could be found the author or the advocate, it was not probable that the inspired writers should have deliberately stated and resolved such a problem. This is but another form of a principle which I have already more than once insinuated, that God’s revelation is not to be made answerable for difficulties never contemplated in the simplicity of His original plan, and pro-

duced only by our own subsequent perversity. Scripture holds a bright lamp at the head of a straight and narrow path, which shines clearly down the whole; if we rush aside into the thickets, we must expect only broken reflections and scattered gleams. The Apostles proceed, as all instructors must, upon the supposition that the precepts they deliver and the examples they set shall be respected as of permanent authority; they cannot be required to provide for all the possible perplexities of a disunion which is itself denounced as sin, any more than for the miserable results of any *other* guilty abandonment of their admonitions. That every devoted Christian should be a member of the special society they had organized, that every member of that society should be a devoted Christian, were two conceptions which blended in their contemplation of its office and vocation in the world; holiness of heart and willing submission to the Apostolate (be it the Apostolate of Paul the founder, or of Timothy or Onesimus the successors) were naturally imagined inseparable; and though they nowhere affirm that these characteristics of a Christian cannot by any possibility be severed, it would be too much to expect that they should have calmly discussed it as probable, and calmly undertaken to console the offenders. Even when (to refer to one oft-abused example) our Lord entertained the case of one who followed not with Him and His apostles,¹ it was but to check uncharitable conclusions about *individuals* by reference to the positive gifts of the man, and the positive value of the work he was performing (in conformity to the principles I have endeavored this day to lay down); by no means to suspend, or alter, or modify, in consideration of any such individual instance of His grace, the peculiar design of the Church and Mission He was constituting. I say, then, the language of the New Testament being framed for that perfect ideal of the Church, in

¹ Mark ix. 38. Luke ix. 49.

which the two conceptions of membership,—that drawn from adhesion to Apostolic government, and that drawn from cordial belief in the Gospel,—exactly coincide, it is plainly possible that that volume should contain no *distinct* provision for the peculiar difficulties that subsequently arose from those human perturbations of the original scheme by which the designed coincidence was lost. Obvious reasons will, indeed, occur why it would have been injurious that it *should* contain any express anticipation of the case that arose at the period of the Continental Reformation; its determination of the question, if lenient, being likely to encourage the tendency to innovation; if rigorous and absolute, to preclude the exercise of divine mercy and of charitable hope. And though we could conjecture no reason at all for an omission, of which advantage has been almost equally taken by *both* parties in this argument, it certainly cannot be considered at all more surprising than the similar omission of distinct instruction as to *other* subsequent difficulties which to the prophetic spirit might have been equally known; for instance, as to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of *any* form of Church monarchy, such as arose in the middle ages; or as to that vast class of questions that have still more largely occupied and perplexed the minds of statesmen and divines from the fourth to the present century,—the true principles and conditions of the union of the Church with the civil power. Indeed it is at once evident that any argument founded upon the allegation of this omission applies indefinitely to a multitude of questions not more precisely resolved; that to all the answer is equally applicable, that the sacred writers must stop *somewhere*, if their writings were to be fitted for general distribution; and that, in the instance before us, having, as they planted their Churches, set the example of the transmission of the Apostolate, their language was naturally framed on the supposition of its perpetuation; that, therefore, habitually indentifying the aggregate of

those whose hearts were "purified by faith" with the aggregate of those who joyfully accepted the apostolic pastorship, they found no occasion for contemplating any such unhappy possibility as the separation of these characteristics of the earthly body of Christ. And hence, it would seem, we need expect in Holy Writ the *express* discussion of this contingency, however interesting it may have become to us, no more than we should anticipate in a book of practical physiology a special determination of the speculative problem, whether a human spirit separated from its bodily organization can still claim the title of a man. Like *this* question, the other must be decided, less from any distinct adjudication of the case in the authorities, than from a patient consideration of the *relative importance* of the qualification deficient and the qualification possessed. And when the matter is brought to this issue;—revolving the specific character of the entire dispensation and doctrine of Jesus Christ; His peculiar regard to the inward state of men; His perpetual appeal to tempers, motives, dispositions; His distinct avowals of the spiritual nature of the kingdom He came to erect,—a kingdom in the heart and will; and similar topics, which, I need not say, form the substance and the characteristic teaching of the whole four Gospels;—considering yet further the brief but significant notices which are given us of the nature and object of the Church; the manner in which, while fixed in its earthly development, like the growth of all other organic bodies, to one definite and ever-recurring type, it is everywhere intimated that the quickening power of the organism, the true eternal ground of its very being, consists in a certain inconceivable union with Him who is the heavenly principle of regenerate life; and that this union, or this indwelling, alone constitutes its dignity, its object, and its value; creating, of course, in all who really share it, under whatever circumstances, the very blessedness the Church, through its teaching and its sacramental functions, is meant

to witness and administer; inasmuch, as though the spirit be the life of the body, the body must never be deemed competent to confine a Spirit infinitely vaster and mightier than itself,—a Spirit *in* which it lives no less truly than that Spirit *in it*;—duly estimating these things, I say it seems impossible to avoid the conviction, that the internal state is that for which the external subordinately exists; that its presence or its absence must in the divine estimate mainly denominate the *individual*; and that when He, “of whose fulness we have all received, and grace for grace,” is pleased to bestow, through whatever supplementary means, His sanctifying influences, it must be,—and equally in all cases can only be,—because He has adopted the happy recipient of them into union with Himself, and, therefore, into the mystical association of His elect people, and therefore virtually, though to us invisibly, into that association which is designed as its earthly form and visible manifestation. And thus is wrought out by the uniting Spirit,—secretly, alas! to us, because by our guilty dissensions we would have it so,—that profound *union* between all godly hearts, after which good men have ever sighed, but which so many among them have been weakly tempted to pursue by the gradual surrender of every definite conviction in religion:—as if we had a right to give what is not our own, to purchase the luxury of a quiet life with the sacrifice of one shred of that precious deposit of truth which is committed to our keeping! Thus, I say, when in your disagreeing brother you see the work of faith made perfect in love, and humility triumphant in the self-denying life of the cross, you are enabled to recognize that of a truth the marks of the Lord Jesus are on him, the true infallible signature of the Holy Ghost sealing unto the day of redemption; and yet, while you adore the mercy that makes him what he is both in himself and as the instrument of benefit to others, to feel also that upon you is imposed the painful obligation to withstand his error, to

refuse the visible fellowship of his schism, to labor by all Christian means to persuade him and his to remove an obstacle that retards the glorious purpose of God, that in the day when He is "King over all the earth," there should be "one Lord, and His name one:"¹—a purpose which shall be fully realized, only when,—in despite of all the temporary oppositions of men, in despite of the far more grievous obstacle of the errors, infirmities, relaxations, and corruptions, that through its various divisions debase His own Church,—He shall yet bind, in and through that Church, all the tribes of men into one spiritual fellowship, that "holy Jerusalem" yet to come, of which the prophetic Spirit intimates that even in that far distant time every stone of its "walls," independent of any exterior support, shall be seen, through all their descending courses, layer under layer, to rest at last upon their foundations alone, and "in whose foundations,"—He Himself the corner-stone,—"are the names of *the twelve Apostles* of the Lamb."²

If, my reverend brethren, you have accompanied me through the course of these considerations, you will, I trust, have found them contribute towards fixing, on enlarged principles, the ground which, in these troubled times of the Church, you can securely occupy. You will have seen how the duly commissioned minister of Christ may assert the special felicities of his position, and yet consistently acknowledge the fellowship of a true internal bond with such individuals as, holding the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, manifest the possession of the Spirit by "the fruits of the Spirit," and can justly plead the authoritative warrant that "by their fruits" they should be "known;" you will have been furnished with the outlines (the occasion admits no more) of a theory, which, instead of vaguely evading notorious difficulties, provides for all the facts of the case as they are found in

¹ Zech. xiv. 9.

² Rev. xxi. 14.

the past history and present circumstances of the whole body of Christian believers; which, expanding with the expanding mercy of God, acknowledges His undoubted agency wherever there is righteousness and true holiness, and yet makes the very immensity of that mercy an additional argument for the obligation of adhering with scrupulous fidelity to that sole form of Church polity and ministerial transmission which they who best knew "the mind of Christ" have for ever consecrated by their sanction.

Amid all the riches of divine mercy, then, and all the varied triumphs of the cross around us, our position is still, in one remarkable respect, peculiar and alone. I have sacrificed this day the easier and more genial task of practical exhortation for the labor, more necessary as things now stand, of clearing a dark and contested question. But for a moment yet, before I leave you to a more authoritative expositor of your duties, let me beseech you, brethren, to remember that if your place is thus prominent in the eye of heaven, your responsibilities are proportionably awful. If I magnify your office, it is that I may magnify your obligations! If no men speak from heaven so directly as we, from no men does heaven expect so faithful a message. It may be indolence and cowardice in others to withdraw from the work; it is high treason against the direct legation of God, in us. Men have dared to speak slightingly of this conception of a transmitted commission; I appeal from hearts embittered by controversial disputings to every unprejudiced mind, when I ask, is there not, after all, something unutterably awful in the thought of a mission inherited thus directly from the Incarnate God? When, instead of the vague inference that finds the proof of a commission in the utility of the office or the necessity of the time, the minister, however humble, can actually trace along the page of history the unbroken succession that ends in the mighty Twelve and their mightier Master;

when the voice that bade him tend the flock of Christ is felt to be the echo,—after many a reflection, indeed, yet still the very echo,—of the voice which spake on the evening of the Resurrection,—“Receive ye the Holy Ghost,”—and that, again, itself an echo from the central recesses of the Father’s own eternity; when, thus, by no ideal connection, however true to the meditative reason, but by plain and tangible links, we see ourselves bound to the living and suffering Christ,—I ask you, does it not give an impression of reality, of awful and awakening reality, to our whole office? Does it not seem to bring Christ fearfully *near* us? Must not a man thus empowered feel himself *sent* with a force and directness nothing else can supply, charged with a work from which he dare not withdraw, and “straitened till it be accomplished?”

Such are my own feelings of the practical value of this great truth; and you will remember that these impressions are independent of all fair controversy; for they turn not even on the necessity of the succession, but on the historical fact that it exists. But if you still hesitate to assume this ground, a large field is open, where we can, not unprofitably, meet. Whatever your conception of the nature of your commission, you acknowledge at least that a commission you have received; Christ has made over to each of us a special portion of His vineyard, to cultivate for immortality. For that definite allotment, and for every soul therein, we shall have to answer in the day of wrath. Those are awful words of the prophet: “Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? What wilt thou say when He shall visit upon thee?”¹ Hundreds, yea, thousands, have passed through the hands of some of us; what report of our ministry have they brought into the world of spirits? Oh, brethren! of a truth they are no slight matters, these souls of men with which we have to

¹ Jer. xiii. 20, 21.

deal! Eternal destinies are suspended on our hourly work; every forgetful day is a robbery of Him whose chief reward for all "the travail of His soul" is in the multitude that we are to train for Him to glory. Shall we disappoint Him, and, as far as in us lies, neutralize the redeeming work of the cross? Called to be the stewards of His household, shall we lay waste his inheritance; or, what is as criminal, suffer it to lie fallow and unproductive? He has promised us His unfailing help in prosecuting the work he began; He has promised us a glory eminent above others even in a world where all is glory;—"rulers over many cities," "the joy of our Lord," "the brightness of the stars for ever and ever." May we daily see before us the crown, and willingly bear the cross we call upon others to carry! May we keep before our thoughts that great and final day of visitation, more awful far than all these its earthly images; "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear," "even the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," to inspect the accounts of our stewardship, to scrutinize our fidelity, to require the blood of the unwarned sinner at the hand of the faithless watchman, to recompense with rest everlasting the humble and laborious minister of truth and peace!

The following Letter, in corroboration of the arguments of the foregoing Sermon, was communicated to the *Irish Ecclesiastical Journal* (February, 1843), in reply to a critique published in the preceding number of that periodical, and signed "A REQUISITIONIST."

SIR,—I shall probably be expected to transmit to you some reply to the observations contained in your last number, on a Visitation Sermon of mine, which was delivered some time since in Derry, and which was intended to afford some suggestions as to the ground to be adopted by our divines in their controversies with the non-episcopal communities. I do so with all the willingness due to a critique characterized by such ability, temperateness, and candor, as that of your correspondent; and (I trust I may, without affectation, say) with an anxious desire that in whatever degree his objections are well founded they may carry their

full weight with the public, whether to modify,—or, if it must be so,—to dismiss from attention altogether, my statements and speculations.

One or two observations relative to the spirit in which the discourse was conceived, it may be well to premise.

Your correspondent seems to imagine the conclusions of my discourse to be (in contrast to his own), *consolatory* to dissenters, and such as will recommend themselves to those among ourselves who look kindly on dissent. I confess I hardly ventured to anticipate any such result; and the event has corroborated my expectations. By both these parties, as far as I can judge from their literary organs, it has been received with distaste; as a view which, under charitable professions, puts them in a far more disadvantageous position, by removing, so far as it is admitted, the force of the one plausible and impressive plea which (especially with pious men within our own Church) had constantly appeared to support their case, and had perpetually been urged in abatement of the claims of their adversaries. In truth the Sermon was written with a studied abstraction from the predilections and opinions of all parties; but I have been peculiarly misconceived, if it be regarded as an apology for *Dissent*, or an alleviation of its culpability. Designed to include under a common principle two classes of facts imagined by thousands among us to be wholly inconsistent, it, of course, required equal and impartial mention to be made of *both*; as is done in the title, and still more distinctly through the body, of the discourse; but my Requisitionist may be assured that the object of the Sermon was far less to “claim sympathy for dissenters” by affirming the propriety of our cordial recognition of instances of genuine holiness outside the Church, than to evince that, *granting*, with the great mass of both our divines and our laity, such recognition, and the measure of sympathy it demands, to be in candor unavoidable, the maintenance of the highest form of Church principles is *therewith strictly consistent*.

The supposition that my discourse was intended rather in excuse for dissent than in vindication of these principles, seems to have been fortified in the mind of your correspondent by a misconception which I hasten to correct. When I spoke of “practically sympathizing” with non-episcopal Christians, I intended the phrase to import,—not “active co-operation,” of which I have clearly denied the lawfulness (for example in p. 433); but, that our internal sympathy with the holiness and the benevolence of such persons was to be a *practical* consequence upon the *theoretical* views enforced; the cultivation of right feelings being itself eminently a practical matter. The double significancy of the word “practical”—which is sometimes limited to outward activity, and sometimes, as in this case, employed in its wider philosophical sense to comprehend the moral and emotional function in general, in contradistinction to the purely speculative—escaped my recollection until your correspondent’s

misunderstanding of my meaning recalled the ambiguity.¹ As to the *amount* of this sympathy with the non-episcopal Christian of unquestioned godliness—how far it is our duty to cherish, how far to guard and limit it—I thought I had sufficiently intimated in the discourse. Supposing the holiness to be such as must be deemed to infer the special grace of Christ, I believe that, amid all the embarrassing circumstances of the case, an inward Christian affection to the individual thus owned by our gracious Master becomes a duty; nor less—though I need not say how guardedly it must be felt or expressed—an approbation of such of his acts or projects of pure benevolence as in nowise involve the spread of his peculiarities: both of which “practical” rules I believe to be perfectly consistent with the conviction of his error, and with that steady refusal of active religious co-operation which either grows directly out of that conviction, or is necessary in order to make that conviction palpable to all around us.

Another point, however, is of greater importance than misunderstandings of this kind, which can only, or chiefly, concern the opinions of the author; it relates to the legitimacy of the *entire method of discussion* adopted in the sermon. It seems to be urged, that there is such a radical distinction between the mode of investigating truth in physical science and in revealed religion, that whereas the alleged facts of experience are alone to found, and alter, and modify, our theories in the one, they must be permitted little or no influence in the other, beyond that of simple confirmation; that is, that wherever subsequent historical phenomena do not seem to coincide in every the minutest respect with our antecedent interpretation of Revelation, they must at once be surrendered as doubtful, or delusive, or irrelevant. This I understand to be the substance of what your correspondent has stated in the latter part of his letter; and to this opinion, which certainly *would* be fatal to all reasoning of the kind I have employed, I cannot consent. Indeed I do not imagine that in *practice* any reflective theologian ever yet consented to such a limitation. Truth, in whatever department, need never be afraid of facts, which are themselves truth; and which are to be tested by much the same rules, and ascribed much the same kind of value, in every region of human knowledge: it being, of course, understood, that such applications of experience are never to be contemplated as affecting (which it would be preposterous to imagine) the great lines of the Faith; but as usefully *aiding* our imperfect conceptions of the laws of divine agency—

¹ There is another expression which the Requisitionist has construed into a strange inconsistency. “The independency of divine grace on its necessary instrumentality” meant merely the independency of grace on the Church System, as a condition absolutely and inherently necessary (which, I have said, we might grant, without any real concession to those who oppose that system); not, as he seems to interpret me, that the independency and the necessity were to be co-existent in the same case, at the same moment.

as illustrating by *new* proofs and examples the true nature of the dealings of God with man; and often, doubtless, as *correcting* by an appeal to observation (conducted, I need not say, with all possible caution) men's hasty anticipations of the principles of the divine government. For, assuredly, all portions of the dispensations of God in the history, both of the Church and of the separate religious bodies, that at various times have accompanied her course, are not only reducible to definite laws of providential government, but reducible finally to those very laws (or to laws *consistent* with those very laws) which are in a large and general way propounded in Holy Scripture. And if so, both may be expected to reflect *reciprocal* illumination. The real difference between this kind of reasoning and ordinary physical science is simply, that in this all the *greater* features of the divine laws are happily fixed for us unchangeably by revelation; but this blessed certainty need not make us doubt that a survey of subsequent facts may not only be directed to the business of classifying these facts under our view of those laws, but *also* justifiably tend to placing those laws (themselves in substance unchanged) in *new* aspects, positions, and mutual relations. One might, perhaps, illustrate such a process by the effect of the establishment of the minor consequences of the law of gravitation upon men's views of that law itself. Researches were prosecuted by men having unbounded faith in the universality of the law; yet even they acknowledged that the law itself assumed new aspects and importance in the light cast upon it by the very facts which *it* alone elucidated. Or still better, to refer to that Newton of the moral world, who attempted and achieved in his own field the same work of applying earthly observation to illustrate and harmonize celestial laws. Who can question that Bishop Butler, in tracing the analogies of ordinary experience to revealed laws of divine agency, has not merely *vindicated* these laws, but actually given us, in many instances, additional views, altogether new and unforeseen, of their very *nature*; and this sometimes wholly from the *unexpected* force of the *parallel adduced from experience*? Indeed, not to speak of speculations like these—so irresistible is the process itself, that it may be doubted whether, from the very nature of the human mind, there can exist the individual who is not forced to interpret all those expressions of Scripture that lie beyond pure historical detail, more or less by his own measure of *experience*; the very agency of divine grace being usually to bestow that blessed experience by which he can, however slowly, rise to apprehend them.

I have spoken of this employment of experience, as helping to clear our conceptions of the working of those *general laws of divine providence and grace*, which are broadly set forth in Scripture; because it is the point which most nearly concerns our immediate question, namely, the mode in which we may best represent to ourselves, and harmonize with

other truths, the operations of grace beyond the Apostolic constitution. But the case becomes, perhaps, more evident, when we think of the numberless instances in which the very interpretation of scriptural *texts* has been modified, or even reversed, by actual experience. The promises (for example) to the Jewish Church *might* have meant a gift of unconditional infallibility; subsequent experience has determined the true interpretation by the errors and fall of that hierarchy. The promises to the Christian Church have been, by an immense body within it, thought to import the same; a far simpler and more conclusive answer than any critical examination of texts, is to point to the miserable failures which have historically demonstrated that no such provision was really in the purposes of Divine Providence, or therefore could have been within the scope of the scriptural expressions adduced. The various theories of prophecy similarly confuted; the early expectation of the immediate advent of Christ supposed to be irrefragably deducible from scriptural phraseology: the anticipation of a permanent gift of miracles by vast numbers still inferred from our Lord's expressions; and the like—are all instances, in which the designs of God and those words of Scripture in which they were embodied, have had their real import illustrated almost solely by the evidence of experience. Indeed, I suppose every man will admit, that the whole course of the world has been, in many respects, different from what a reader of the New Testament might naturally at first sight have anticipated; and that it is just this superficial difference which makes the profound real harmony between the foreshadowings of revelation, and the subsequent history of man, so far as we can establish it, so peculiarly impressive an evidence of the Divine Providence that equally superintended *both*.

Pursued, then, within due limits and with proper caution, I cannot but believe that this kind of comparison between the testimony of subsequent experience, and the general laws of divine mercy announced in the Scriptures, is not only legitimate but valuable; not only valuable but in a great degree *unavoidable* by any reflective student of the word and works of God. And I think the instance before us (the relation of divine grace to the mere acceptance of sacred truth on the one hand, and to the special gifts of the Church on the other), forms a good example of the *kind* of modifying effect upon our views which it may fairly exercise; not disturbing any truth, but helping us to balance and arrange them all; and often, where there are two or three ways of conceiving the same law, forming a sort of *experimentum crucis* to determine between them.

But, of course, all this comparison of Scripture and experience must suppose two conditions: the *reality of the facts* alleged, and the *admissibility, on the ordinary rules of scriptural inquiry*, of that law or mode of divine agency which is supposed to embrace them.

I confess I saw with some surprise, the refusal of your correspondent

to admit the *former* of these conditions; the reality of the alleged instances of genuine Christian piety in non-episcopal bodies. I am wholly at a loss to conceive on what grounds such hesitation can be entertained, which would not involve in skepticism, that whole principle of inferring inward holiness from outward indications, which our Lord has so distinctly sanctioned in His memorable maxim; and on which, indeed, some of the most important portions of the very evidences of Christianity must be considered to rest. The admitted *possibility* of mistake here affects the question no more than it affects any other question of facts; neither are we discussing the *comparative degree* of sanctity, but the possession *at all* of such a measure as is the special fruit of the Gospel. But the Requisitionist seems unconsciously to narrow the field of observation. He will remember that we are concerned, not alone with the English schismatic, whose case is probably the most inexcusable in the world, and whose attainments in holiness may be expected proportionably to suffer; but with vast bodies of Christians on the Continent and elsewhere, whose position is now the quiet inheritance of centuries; whose position was, in some instances, all but forced on their forefathers, by the corruptions of the Church Catholic itself; and who, having no pure episcopal Church within their reach, are never led to suspect even the possibility of their ecclesiastical organization being other than conformable to the design of God.¹ That such bodies are likely to lose important benefits, both doctrinal and practical (not to speak of more mysterious gifts), in losing the apostolic government, I have already observed, in the papers to which your correspondent refers; that they nevertheless possess, and have from the beginning possessed, conspicuous examples of such sanctity as only the Gospel and grace of Christ could produce; the sanctity arising (in the same way as among ourselves) directly from the influence of the truths believed—I can doubt only when I have learned to doubt the possibility of *any* inference of piety from practice, or, indeed, the legitimacy of deducing the nature of any mental state whatever from its external indications. These are points upon which every man must decide for himself, according as the evidence strikes him; and upon which detailed discussion would be endless. But I apprehend that the Requisitionist will find that the solution with which he dismisses the difficulty, by refusing to admit the fact, will satisfy very few earnest inquirers. I find no such hesitation in that line

¹ It is for this reason that we must be cautious how we apply the rigorous maxims of the early Church to the present state of the Christian world. Instances of holiness could seldom or never be expected beyond the verge of the Catholic Church, at a period when, no pretext existing for separation, to be a schismatic was almost inevitably to be vain, arrogant, and impious; which, of course, would preclude the sanctifying result. No candid man can dream of comparing this with the state of things at the Reformation.

of English divines of which he has spoken; and to whom he may be quite assured I did *not* allude when I spoke of those whose theories, rigidly understood, would place the pious Congregationalist on a level with the Heathen.

To me, and to all those beside me, who do admit the reality of unquestionable holiness, and holiness specifically Christian, existing beyond the range of the apostolic succession of the ministry, it becomes necessary to reflect how far this remarkable fact is provided for in our theological systems. This brings me to the *other* condition of which I have spoken—the right conception, namely, of the scriptural intimations of holiness as connected *both* with divine knowledge and with the Church life. To the Requisitionist all further discussion must, of course, be considered as speculation raised on an imaginary hypothesis; but even to him it may be matter of curiosity to observe, whether the views I have suggested possess the *consistency* which forms the proper truth of hypothetical reasoning.

The general principles, then, which I conceive to be applicable to this double fact—viz: the transmission from Scripture and antiquity of the claims of a certain definite successive Society to be the Church of Christ—and the observed existence of much of that holiness beyond it, which it is the promise of the Church to possess, her office to exhibit and preserve—are such as these:—

1. That there may be *coexistent laws of divine grace*, each of which tends independently and of itself to procure certain spiritual blessings, and ordinarily operates to procure them; and, nevertheless, all of which are obligatory, and produce their highest results only in conjunction. Such are—the sequence of holiness on the cordial belief of the chief parts of divine truth by one omitting no known duty, *and* the life within the appointed Society, with its special results.

2. That there may be *variations* of divine laws, in merciful accommodation to human infirmity, which yet shall leave those original laws permanently obligatory.

3. That the Church, or Body of Christ, being a mysterious Society, to us at once visible in its earthly, and invisible in its celestial aspect—it is easily conceivable that holy men who, through ignorance or any other infelicity of circumstances, live outside the earthly Society, *may yet celestially be registered and accounted as its real members*; unquestionable holiness, which supposes union with Christ, being to us a fair presumption in behalf of that incorporation; and the probability, or even the certainty of that extension of mercy still leaving it obligatory as ever (or even more obligatory, where known, through the additional bond of gratitude), to fulfil the whole will of God by belonging to the earthly association.

It is against the first of these positions that the chief force of the Requisitionist's argument is directed. Our difference may, I suppose, be

expressed thus. His view is, that the two laws therein noted (that proportioned measures of holiness shall ordinarily accompany humble faith—and that the favor of God shall bless those who live within the Church), are intended absolutely to limit each other; insomuch that there is no scriptural ground for anticipating any spiritual blessing to accrue to any individual who does not fulfil both. My supposition is—that they are collateral laws which are both obligatory; which undoubtedly do in various ways sustain each other; which (as I have largely argued in a passage not at all inconsistent with this¹), Scripture, for the wisest reasons, nowhere *distinctly* treats as things ever to be sundered, and which it is always a crime or a misfortune to sunder; but, nevertheless, the condition in one of which (namely, the sincere reception of the chief elements of divine truth, with desire to obey to the utmost of knowledge), is so represented in the Bible, that we cannot reasonably doubt that it would *of itself* tend to produce high results of moral purification—results which we cannot well venture to limit—even apart from those other means of grace, whose obligation, when made known, it strengthens.

It is to be observed, that not only faith in divine truth, so far as made known, but prayer, self-denial, solicitous obedience, and every other means of endeavoring to approach or please God, that can be conceived to exist in a mind ignorant of the duties connected with the Church life, must be considered as equally concerned in this question. But it may be sufficient to speak of *faith* in the character and in the promises of God to obedience—faith in all of the Gospel, which can be considered apart from the peculiar constitution of the holy society of the Church—as that gift must, of course, form the *foundation* of any advances in sanctification which a believer in Christ outside that body can attain.

It appears to me, then, that the whole tone of Scripture would lead us to anticipate, that this reception of divine knowledge into a sincere and humble breast would, apart from the peculiar obligations and blessings of the Church Society, ordinarily bring with it most important and precious spiritual results; results which are real, even though they are imperfect in not reaching the *further* office of faith to lead to the Church, and to find its full consummation in the Church alone. It is in this conviction that I have spoken of this law of the influence of divine knowledge as being of “wider compass” than the law of the Church Society, because, arising from the very nature of the human mind, it is instantaneously applicable to every rational being—*was* applicable before the Church existed, and is *still* applicable in cases where Church communion is impossible. And I have said that it operates “without express limitation,” because, however aided by other helps, or hindered by other checks, in itself it appears to have no fixed limit; there is no point in the life of an individual, whether within or without the Church,

¹ Sermon, pp. 428—431.

in which we can say that *more* of humble faith will not ordinarily procure more of proportional heavenliness. This seems to me a sort of axiom, or transcendental truth (as I have called it in the Sermon), to which, however we may arrange other truths around it, we cannot well admit any exception.

That the humble belief of divine truths may, under grace, be expected to produce these results by its own independent operation (however strengthened, increased, and perfected by other means,—however working at disadvantage in the lack of them), may appear from such considerations as these.

In the first place, it is evident, that it has, independently of all these other accompaniments, a *natural fitness* for the purpose of moving the heart; and that the ordinary method of grace acting on humble hearts is, to make such natural fitnesses independently available *according* as they arise, and *as far* as they will go. Thus, the heartfelt *prayer* of a good man, having a natural fitness to engage the ear of a merciful God, we are never accustomed to doubt that it *does* so in *all* possible cases, and irrespectively of all other means whatever. We can conceive of no special covenant with the Church, of such a nature as to interfere with the great general law,—that the ear of God shall be open to all who sincerely call on Him. Our conviction in this case arises from a profound impression of the character of the God with whom we have to do; an impression derived less from special texts than from the whole bearing of Scripture; and which forces us to believe that there never can exist, in any time, place, or circumstance, a sincere motion of any faculty of understanding or heart towards Him that *can* be wholly unacceptable or unaccepted. And as we are thus justified in anticipating that those who, ignorant of the Church duty, *p. ay* outside it, shall, amid many disadvantages, still be, in their measure, heard; so we may well expect that those who, ignorant of the same duty, yet *know* all others, and know them in order to willing obedience, shall find, amid all disadvantages, a proportionate blessing attending that obedient knowledge. In other words,—we are *not* to expect that where there is a sincere use of means in themselves plainly fitted to produce godliness, our merciful Father will specially suspend His blessing, or countervail that natural fitness, because the means are not completed by others yet unknown. We may conceive such cases as in all their various degrees imperfect; we cannot dare to regard them as *null*.

And thus the special ordinance of the Church, while it adds both to our duties and our blessings, must not be understood as if it at once annulled those great primary maxims springing from the essential nature of man and of God,—the purifying power of all divine truth, or the general mercy of the Father of all to sincere supplicants. It is under the shadow of these vast principles that the Church herself lives and grows; they are vaster than the Church, or the Church could never *enlarge her*

boundaries. The special promises of God are covenanted (for how else could they be delivered without tempting to carelessness?) to perfect belief and obedience; and they include the Church life as portion of that obedience; but they do not therefore abrogate that antecedent law by which holiness *in general* follows humble faith *in general*, and which explains the partial blessedness that we now see to accompany partial knowledge and consequent partial obedience. Indeed, unless the *principle* of such an accompaniment to the strict letter of any divine covenant be admitted, it seems difficult to conceive how there ever could be that *progress* in knowledge and grace which we know is everywhere scripturally recognized; for wherever there is progress there must first be imperfection,—defective knowledge, partial performance. Even *within* the Church, with how much dependence on these universal axioms of divine mercy must the covenant be interpreted; for on the lowest representation of its condition, which of the Church's own adult members can be said completely to fulfil them?

Again,—it must be remembered that this pursuit of divine knowledge, and belief therein, must be to those, not born in the Church, the first step to *bring them thither*; that as *such* it is confessedly blessed; and that even in the many cases in which, unhappily, it does not terminate in leading them to that holy Society, it would be unreasonable to suppose that God would miraculously revoke and annul the sanctification already attained. Every non-episcopal Christian of real sincerity and godliness may be conceived as one who, searching for wisdom as for hid treasures, has not been able to see this peculiar duty, but has in the search seen, and recognized, and fulfilled, numberless others. Such a man I should expect to find suffering under serious disadvantages; but to the measure of his knowledge, I should expect him to manifest a spirit purified and elevated. And the *fact* seems to me to justify the anticipation as abundantly as any scientific theory was ever yet verified by observation.

But that this ordinary power of belief to generate sanctity in proportion to sincerity, humility, and the weight of the truths believed, may be recognized without any interference with the peculiar blessings and obligations of the Church, appears, perhaps, more forcibly still, when we candidly estimate the way in which its efficacy is scripturally described. We find it attached to the knowledge *as such*, and represented as arising by a kind of moral necessity out of the knowledge; the knowledge supplying motives of action and stimulants to affection that are to operate in this case exactly as in every other; the resulting blessings growing with the growth of the knowledge, and diminishing with its loss; the persuasive influence of the knowledge being addressed to the rational faculties, and so appealing to them, that it is treated as a perversion almost inconceivable, that it should exist in the mind *without* practical consequences, it being everywhere plainly intimated that in “an honest

and good heart" the wonder would be, not that piety should, but that it should *not*, flourish under the influence of this knowledge. When, in addition to all this, I find the constitution of a Society under successive ministrations, consecrated by God's blessing, chartered as the instrument of precious benefits,—I may not doubt that incorporation into this Society is a duty,—a high and awful duty,—a duty everywhere to be pressed as permanent and unqualified; but assuredly I should not expect, that if ever instances should arise of individuals unhappily ignorant of that duty, the previous special, appropriate, ordinary tendency of divine knowledge should be suddenly arrested in every such case. Nor indeed if the ordinary tendency of divine knowledge, as such, to produce holiness (and *so far*, acceptability with God) be denied, can I conceive on what principle the position of "the pious Congregationalist" *can* be separated from that of the pious Heathen; both being beyond the Apostolic Polity, and the circumstance of difference being solely that possession of Gospel knowledge and the state of heart and life it is fitted to produce, to which on this theory nothing more is granted than the casual, contingent, extraordinary mercy which few are disposed to refuse to Socrates or Antonine. If we are certain,—as certain as of any theological proposition beyond the creed,—that such men as Edwards of America, or even Howe and Henry among English Nonconformists, lived and may still live in a higher state than Socrates,—and that, simply by virtue of superior knowledge purifying humble hearts,—is it in virtue of an "extraordinary" exercise of mercy? But what can be the meaning of an extraordinary dispensation of whose operation we are *certain*?

That the tendency, then, of holy truths in humble hearts is to produce sanctity of thought and life; that this tendency springs from the very nature of the truths themselves, and may, under the divine blessing, be ordinarily expected to operate in proportion as they are known and felt; that the result of a great body of such truths of the most direct practical pertinence, thus received, may be expected not to be suspended, where other truths are unknown which do not alter the nature of the former, though they greatly illustrate their bearing and heighten their value;—this is what I mean to convey when I speak of the universal application of this law of divine knowledge; when I set it forth as satisfying the facts which I, and thousands beside me, think we see; and when I maintain that its full and cordial recognition, with every practical consequence it can involve, leaves the original disposition of the Church and ministry of Christ unalterably obligatory on every human being who hears the Gospel.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

WILLIAM ARCHER BUTLER.

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