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SERMONS AND EXPOSITIONS

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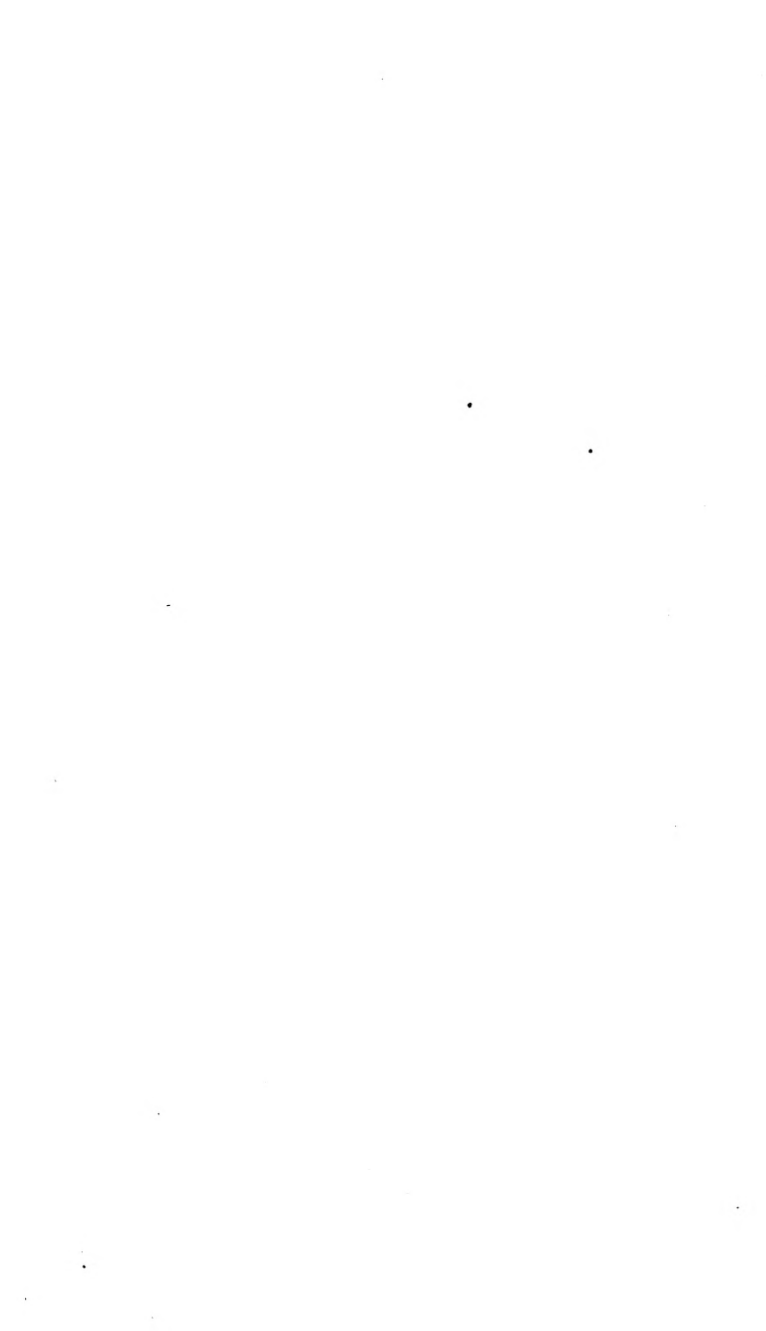
BY THE LATE JOHN ROBERTSON, D.D.
GLASGOW CATHEDRAL

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR
BY THE REV. J. G. YOUNG, MONIFIETH



ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER
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1865



TO
THE ELDERS
IN
THE CATHEDRAL, GLASGOW,
AND IN
THE CHURCH OF MAINS AND STRATHMARTINE
THIS VOLUME
Is Dedicated
IN REMEMBRANCE OF
THEIR FRIEND AND LATE PASTOR.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS volume has been prepared in compliance with the desire expressed by many of Dr Robertson's friends, that some of his sermons should be selected for publication. It is prefaced by a brief Memoir of Dr Robertson, written by one of his earliest and most intimate friends, the Rev. J. G. Young, of Monifieth.

The Sermons have been printed exactly as they were left by their author, with the exception of a few inconsiderable verbal changes. In reading and judging of them, it should be kept in remembrance that none of them were written with a view to publication, that they were laid aside immediately after being preached, and never revised, or altered in any way.

The First Part in this volume consists of sermons written during that period of Dr Robertson's life when he was minister of the parish of Mains and Strathmartine. The selection of sermons to represent this period has been limited and rendered diffi-

cult by the loss of many of the most valuable of his earlier manuscripts.

The sermons in Part Second were written when Dr Robertson was minister of the Cathedral, Glasgow. It was generally his custom to make one of his discourses each Sunday of a directly practical or devotional character, and to choose for the subject of the other sermon the exposition of a difficult passage of Scripture, or the unfolding of some important point of doctrine. Sermons of this latter class have been selected for Part Second.

In the summer of 1864, when he was compelled to desist from all active ministerial duty, it was Dr Robertson's purpose to prepare and publish a volume bearing on some of the more important questions of theology, or interpretation of Scripture. This work he was unable to enter upon; but the "Thoughts and Expositions" in Part Third are a few slighter articles, written at intervals, which he intended to revise and to include in that volume. He had begun a lengthened article upon the subject, "That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;" but the few pages written are in too unfinished a state for publication.

E. ROBERTSON.

CONTENTS.

MEMOIR,	PAGE xiii
-------------------	--------------

PART FIRST.

THE AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST,	
“ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—2 Cor. v. 20.	
THE HIDDEN ONES OF GOD,	20
“ Thy hidden ones.”—Ps. lxxxiii. 3.	
THE LAND OF THE STRANGER,	36
“ How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land.”—Ps. cxxxvii. 4.	
JAIRUS’ DAUGHTER,	52
“ And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name ; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death : I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed ; and she shall live,” &c., &c.—MARK v. 22-24, 35-43.	
GOD’S COMMANDMENTS A PROOF OF LOVING-KINDNESS,	66
“ And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand.”—GEN. xxxiii. 10.	
RIGHTEOUSNESS THE TRUE NATURE OF MAN,	80
“ For that which I do, I allow not ; for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I.”—ROM. vii. 15.	

	PAGE
MAN'S NEED OF HELP FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT,	92
<p>“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.”—ROM. vii. 18, 19.</p>	
FAREWELL ADDRESS AT MAINS AND STRATHMARTINE,	106
PART SECOND.	
FALSE VIEWS AS TO THE NATURE OF GOD,	117
<p>“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”—PS. l. 21.</p>	
CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE,	131
<p>“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”—JOHN xiv. 6.</p>	
CHRIST THE TRUE AND UNIVERSAL LIGHT,	144
<p>“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—JOHN i. 9.</p>	
THE INDWELLING CHRIST—Part I.,	157
<p>“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—2 COR. v. 14, 15.</p>	
THE INDWELLING CHRIST—Part II.,	168
<p>“Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”—2 COR. v. 16.</p>	
THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION,	180
<p>“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation,” &c., &c.—2 COR. v. 17-20.</p>	
CHRISTIANS CHOSEN OF GRACE, BUT UNTO WORKS,	191
<p>“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”—JOHN xv. 16.</p>	

	PAGE
SIN CONDEMNED BY THE GOSPEL,	204
" For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."—ROM. viii. 3.	
THE PARABLE OF THE POTTER,	217
" The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work upon the wheels," &c., &c.—JER. xviii. 1-19.	
THE VALUE OF THE SIMPLE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY,	230
" Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect."—1 COR. ii. 6.	

PART THIRD.

THOUGHTS AND EXPOSITIONS :

" Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ?	
" I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.	
" Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat ?	
" I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me : for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."—ISA. lxiii. 1-4,	249
" Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross."—COL. ii. 15,	251
" The glory which Thou hast given me I have given them."—JOHN xvii. 22,	255
" Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."—JOHN xiv. 27.	
" These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might	

	PAGE
remain in you, and that your joy might be full."— <i>JOHN</i> xv. 11.	
"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."— <i>MATT.</i> xi. 28-30,	259
"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."— <i>JOHN</i> xiv. 27,	269
"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you."— <i>JOHN</i> xv. 11,	271
"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me."— <i>JOHN</i> xiv. 1,	275
"Without me ye can do nothing."— <i>JOHN</i> xv. 5,	280
"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world . . . only Luke is with me."— <i>2 TIM.</i> iv. 10,	282
"Trees of righteousness."— <i>ISA.</i> lxi. 3,	284
"He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel."— <i>PS.</i> ciii. 7,	288
"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican: James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbæus, whose sur- name was Thaddæus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."— <i>MATT.</i> x. 2-4,	292
"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."— <i>ACTS</i> ii. 47,	300
"How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house?"— <i>MATT.</i> xii. 29,	303

MEMOIR.

THOSE who were "lovely and pleasant in their lives" are not wholly separated from us even by death. And we lift up our hearts in thankfulness to Almighty God, not only for the fellowship of those friends who, while they were yet with us, represented what we most approved, and what we also desire to be, but that we are still permitted to enter into their silent, yet most eloquent society. To this world of the past, where, in some measure, our dear departed friends still live for us, the mind reverts often with complacency. It is full of pleasant memories, peopled with kind looks, friendly words, generous praise, honest service. But to make this world of ours the world of others cannot wholly be. That which the mind sees clearly and distinctly in contemplation, refuses to take shape, and falls far below our own ideal. This difficulty so often experienced presents itself with peculiar force in attempting to write the present brief Memoir of one of the most distinguished and best-beloved ministers of the Church. It will be understood and appreciated at once by those who

knew the late Dr Robertson. Let it be remembered that as there are some faces difficult to draw, which perplex and baffle the artist in his attempt to transfer them to his canvas, so there are some stories which it is not easy to tell. The desired remembrance will modify the disappointment, and disarm the censure with which some readers of this narrative will be ready to exclaim, "This, this is not my friend."

JOHN ROBERTSON was born in the city of Perth on the 9th day of April 1824, and when he died, on the 9th of January 1865, had not completed his forty-first year. His parents were in a comparatively humble rank of life, and he was the only child of his mother, who was deprived of her husband not long after marriage, and left to depend on her own resources and her own industry for support. At an early age her son was sent to an elementary school in Perth, taught by Mr Crichton, now parochial schoolmaster of Longforgan. From the first the attention of Mr Crichton was directed to his new pupil, from the docility he manifested, and the ease with which he mastered all his lessons. Very soon he attained the head of the school, and maintained his superiority against all comers, though many of his schoolfellows were much older than himself. This superiority was the result, not merely of remarkable natural endowments, but of studious habits not often found in one so young. The back room in his mother's house was his study. There, in a cor-

ner, his chair was set beside a shelf which contained the books immediately in use, and there, evening after evening, when other boys were roaming outside intent on amusement, he was to be found busily engaged in the acquisition of knowledge. It was in this spot that he began that career which conducted him to future eminence. It was his custom in the evenings to prepare first his lessons for next day; but as these did not tax his time or his talents very heavily, he had always leisure for his own private reading, and this soon embraced a range of subjects extraordinary in one of his tender years. It was not only the evenings that were thus devoted to reading; the youthful student took no part in school games or hardy out-door exercises, but always carried a book with him to read while others were at play; even during half-holidays he withdrew to his favourite corner in his mother's room, and then speedily became absorbed in some favourite author, or some new book he had secured for the occasion. A mode of life so sequestered and sedentary, while it rapidly developed and matured his mental powers, was certainly not favourable to the formation of his physical system. Had there been less work and more play, the Church might not have been so early deprived of one of its most eminent members.

From the elementary school, the next step in advance was entrance into the Perth Seminaries; and there, accordingly, John Robertson, still a mere boy,

was sent. Such, however, had been his progress in the elementary school, that instead of beginning with the first form, he entered the third class, which ranked on the senior side of the classical department. In this higher sphere of educational training, he soon manifested the superiority of his talents, so much so as to attract the marked and special notice of Mr Logan, who was at the time rector of the Grammar School, and himself a distinguished and enthusiastic classical scholar; and as it was soon found that no class could keep pace with young Robertson, Mr Logan took pleasure in carrying him on into the higher regions of classical literature by reading with him in private. What the extent of this reading was may be understood by the following anecdote, given in the words of a narrative kindly furnished by the Rev. J. Whyte Mailler, Huntly: *—"One day," writes Mr M., "I met him proceeding to Mr Logan's house; and as I had been already a year at college, he inquired about the University exercises, and asked how much Greek was prescribed at a time. I said, 'About a page or thirty lines in the senior division.' He immediately added, 'I have got five hundred lines to read to Logan to-day.' I was astonished; and replied, 'You surely

* The kindness of those who have furnished information, bearing on the life and labours of Dr Robertson, is here gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are due to the Rev. J. Whyte Mailler of Huntly, for the interesting narrative furnished by him of Dr Robertson's early life. This narrative has been of much use, and on several occasions it is quoted verbatim.

have got a week for all that.' 'No,' he answered, 'I go daily, and read what I have got ready, and to-day I have got all that prepared.'" The result of these private and voluntary readings was, that before leaving the Grammar School, in addition to the usual extracts contained in the class-books, the young student had mastered and professed the twenty-four books of the *Odyssey*, twelve of the *Iliad*, the *Medea* of Euripides, and the *Œdipus* of Sophocles.

This profession was something more than nominal. It was put to the most rigid and searching proof on the day of public examination; and such was the manner in which the young scholar acquitted himself, that it is still remembered and spoken of with wonder and admiration by some who were present. At the same time that he was making such progress in classical literature, his attention was turned to modern languages; and after studying a French grammar for some time in private, he picked up so much acquaintance with the elements of the language that he was able to join the senior French class in the Perth Seminaries; and here, also, though he had to contend with formidable competitors, he in a short time stood first. The Perth Seminary seems in these days to have been favoured with eminent teachers, men who were not only able scholars themselves, but who could appreciate and cherish ability when manifested by their pupils. How often this is wanting, many a sensitive and aspiring scholar has reason to know: the want of friendly counsel and generous

well-earned praise has disappointed his rising hopes, and repressed his assiduous efforts. It was fortunately otherwise in the experience of the subject of this memoir; as he had found one kind friend in the rector of the Seminaries, so he found another equally kind and equally competent in Mr Laurence Craigie, the French teacher. Devoted to the study of continental literature, Mr Craigie saw in young Robertson a pupil after his own heart, manifested the same interest in him as other masters had done, and gradually made him the companion of his own studies of the best French and German authors, opening up to him the great field of modern languages. The date of these labours may be set down as between his eleventh and sixteenth years: they were more than enough to engross the whole time and task the whole abilities of any ordinary student: but, in addition to this, he was distinguished as a rapid and exact arithmetician, was well versed in practical mathematics, and far advanced in the science of algebra. In the midst of these various avocations, he found time to make himself acquainted with the best English authors. Even when attending the elementary school, he used to surprise his companions by quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, or interest them greatly by recounting one of the scenes from Sir Walter Scott. And now he continued and extended his researches till they embraced an extent of reading remarkable in any man, but truly wonderful in a youth scarcely sixteen; and these, it is believed, were at this period

of his life the only recreations with which he relieved his more severe and abstract studies.

As an instance of the facility which he had acquired, both in the French language and his own tongue, the following anecdote may be given : * —

“A retired clergyman, who knew and admired young John Robertson’s abilities, was in the habit of receiving an occasional and very welcome visit from him. One day when he entered, he found his clerical friend reading a volume of French sermons. He was invited to take the book, and try to translate a page aloud. He at once consented, and continued to read on without repeating the French, till his listener could scarcely believe that he was not reading out of an English book after all. In conversation with a friend afterwards, the clergyman stated, as a subject of astonishment, that from the mere hearing he could not have detected the difference between the extemporised translation and the reading of an English sermon, so easily and elegantly did he form his sentences, so fluently and appropriately did he classify and command his words.”

The following estimate of his character and disposition at this time forms the appropriate close of his school career : † — “With all his intellectual energy and wealth, he was remarkably modest and meek. Amiability was the most prominent feature in his disposition : many words of a genial kind, and

* Mr Mailler’s narrative.

† Ibid.

overflowing with good humour, passed from his lips; but an irascible temper he never betrayed, and an angry word seldom or never escaped him.

“In another respect he was an exception to an almost universal rule. For what boy is there that has not at one time or another received correction from his teachers, or that has not had his brawls and his battles, and both given and received punishment? Our dear departed friend was never in the *mêlée* of an altercation; peaceful and pleasant from first to last he pursued life’s pilgrimage; a cross word was never addressed to him by any teacher, and far less was any corrective discipline ever administered; for he was a pattern of propriety, docility, and diligence. “It was also impossible for any schoolmaster to quarrel with him, being so gentle, decorous, and dignified; and as he never provoked retaliation, nor stirred a bad feeling, so mischief could find no occasion to come near him, and the most froward and troublesome were disarmed and pacified in his presence. In every seminary he attended he secured the love and respect of all his class-fellows, while all the while he was so quiet and simple in his demeanour that no stranger would have suspected the latent power and mental treasures which lurked under an exterior so unpretending.”

There were not a few, as may well be supposed, in Perth who had observed the remarkable proficiency of the young student, who admired his character, and took a warm interest in his future career. All such

friends were anxious that he should prosecute his studies by entering one of the Scottish universities. This point was not, however, easily or soon settled, from the unwillingness of his mother to part with him, and lose the society of her only child. On him this affectionate resistance operated with powerful influence; he knew well that the secret source of this opposition was nothing else than attachment to himself, and he therefore refrained from expressing his own feelings from reluctance to cross the wishes of a dear parent, unprepared to endure in solitude the sacrifice of his absence.

The principal agent in procuring his mother's consent was Mr Crichton, who was anxious that his favourite pupil, whose opening mind he first had trained, and whose dawning hopes he had first encouraged, should proceed to a higher sphere of learning, and prepare himself for entering on the ministry, a profession for which he was fitted, both by his character and his talents. Mr Crichton, therefore, took up the question of going to college in earnest, and never rested till he had gained his point, and it had been finally determined that his young friend and former scholar should be entered at the university of St Andrews the next year. Long before he actually came to St Andrews, young Robertson's reputation had preceded him; students of the first session from Perth used to talk of the wonderful scholar that was coming up from their town next year, who, among other feats, could repeat by heart two or three books

of Homer in the original, and translate any part of it *ad aperturam*. “How well I remember these stories,” is the testimony of one who was then a student at St Andrews, and is now a gifted minister of the Church of Scotland, “and with how much curiosity did I and others look for his coming next year; but when I was introduced to him, I could scarcely believe that the quiet, gentle, unpretending lad I saw could possess the powers and the scholarship of which I had heard the report.” Making allowance for the exaggeration which so often accompanies such reports, it was quickly found that the story of this quiet unpretending youth’s acquisitions was substantially true. In the competition for bursaries, which marks the commencement of the first year, he greatly distinguished himself, and at the end of the first session he stood first in Greek, and second in Mathematics. The next session found him first in Greek, and first in Mathematics, carrying off the gold medal in the latter class from all competitors. In the fourth year he also obtained the first prize in the class of Natural Philosophy. In the classes for teaching Humanity, Logic, and Moral Philosophy no prizes were awarded, and no opportunity given to the students for obtaining distinction, otherwise, it cannot be doubted that he would have obtained the highest honours. During his attendance at college, and in the long vacation, he persevered in that course of various and private reading, on which he had so early entered. It is told of

him at this period,* that having purchased an edition of Molière's works in seven volumes, he resolved to read it through during the brief interval allowed for breakfast between nine and ten o'clock. After despatching breakfast, half an hour at most was all that remained to him, and this half hour is usually a very idle listless half hour, even with earnest students; but he made such good use of it that he accomplished his purpose of reading the whole of Molière's works. Latterly he had acquired so intimate an acquaintance with the great French comedian's vocabulary and style, that he could read his plays with the same facility as an English book. Having possessed himself of Cicero's works, in ten volumes, he read them through during the vacation, though he was at the time engaged in teaching; many other works were mastered in the same way, but he made so little parade of his diligence and learning that no one perhaps ever knew the extent and variety of his attainments. During his first session at St Andrews he met with the greatest affliction of his life, in the loss of his mother. He received tidings of her illness shortly after the Christmas recess, and was told to hasten home if he would see her alive; he arrived in time to witness the closing scene, and henceforward and for long afterwards he was without a home, almost without a relative.

His mother's loss made a deep and lasting impres-

* Mr Mailler's narrative.

sion on him, yet he never once entered upon the subject, even with his most intimate friends. This grief was so wholly and peculiarly his, that he did not care to show to others those feelings into which they could not enter. Even among his fellow-students, when he returned to college, he remained silent and reserved, not obtruding his sorrow upon them. All could see by his demeanour that a change had come over him, but they could also see that he bore his loss with meekness and with fortitude. Let none imagine that this reserve arose from any want of feeling. Those who feel most keenly are not always, not often, most demonstrative. That sorrow which is quiet and silent, which makes no outward show, which even bears the appearance of cheerfulness, is often the most real and the most lasting. So it was with the subject of this Memoir; he did not soon forget. There can be no doubt that he understood his position, and felt himself, when his mother died, very much alone in the world. And yet, how gracious, how good, God was to this solitary, friendless student! He gave him for his friends all that ever he met, He smoothed his path through life, caused difficulties to vanish, opened up the path to distinction, and then, last and most loving of all,—though we would fain have retained him—He took him to dwell for ever with Himself.

After his first session at college, Mr Robertson was engaged during the vacation as assistant teacher in Mr Crichton's school in Perth; and in his former

teacher he still found a true friend, whose house became very much his home. It is told, by those best acquainted with this part of his career, how the children soon learned to love their new teacher;—their eyes brightened at his approach, for in him they found not only an able, but a most amiable and gentle instructor, who, while he possessed himself, and to the last retained, much of the simplicity and bright cheerfulness of childhood, had looked with no common eye into the great question of education, and understood, as few did, its true meaning and method. Until he took his degree of M.A., at the conclusion of his course in the Old College, Mr Robertson's time was divided between his attendance at St Andrews and his duties as assistant teacher in Perth, yet he found leisure to pursue other studies and attend to other branches of knowledge. Things there were he did at this time, indicating the possession of latent powers which might have carried him to eminence in many directions, but which he just touched with careless hand and put aside, sometimes to the regret of those who were more ambitious for him than he ever was for himself. He seemed, indeed, always to live in an element of content—happy to be what he was, but not careful, not troubled much what others thought of him—and yet all thought, all spoke well of him—far better, he would have said in his modesty, than he deserved; and so he left the Old College with many friends, without having made an enemy, and without a rival. In looking back for a moment

at his studies up to this period, it will be manifest that he brought with him to college an amount of scholarship and reading beyond what is possessed by ordinary students even when they *leave* college and take their degree. To a considerable extent, therefore, he must have found himself going over old ground, and that without the stimulus he had received in Perth from the warm personal interest its masters took in his progress, and the assistance they so generously afforded in bringing him on. *Alma Mater* could not depart from her course even for him, or extend to him that fostering care which he had hitherto received, and which, perhaps, was necessary to him that he might put forth all his powers and sustain his hitherto unwearied efforts. Arguing from probabilities, the result with any student would be a loss of impulse, probably a departure from those studious habits for which there was not the same demand as formerly. With one of Mr Robertson's temperament, and in his peculiar position, this was more especially likely to be the case. That such *was* the case, and that the effects of the *arrest* influenced him, perhaps unconsciously, during the rest of his life, seems at least probable. That St Andrews did much for him is beyond question, but Perth did yet more. It was there that he devoted himself with the greatest diligence and zeal to the acquisition of knowledge. Some of those who knew him afterwards in St Andrews, towards the close of his college life, wondered when

Robertson studied. He never seemed to work hard, was not by any means one who rose early and sat late; on the contrary, he was often seen out of doors, and was not averse to join in any innocent amusement. When visitors came to his room he was never interrupted, was always ready to converse, had almost the air of one who had little to do. The secret of this lay not merely in remarkable natural endowments; it was also the result of early and close application, which had led him far beyond his fellows at a period when other students are only beginning their work, but which, having lost something of its first impulse, was not again resumed.

From the Old College at St Andrews, Mr Robertson entered the college of St Mary's, or "the Hall," as it was familiarly termed, in order to attend during three years those classes which in the Church of Scotland are more immediately preparatory for the work of the ministry. These classes in St Mary's College were four in number, Theology, Church History, Biblical Criticism, and Hebrew. Though nothing could be more quiet and uneventful than his career at the Hall, he maintained his high reputation, and continued to impress both the Professors and his fellow-students with the idea of his eminent abilities; but still more, all were attached to him by that amiable temper, that simple manner, that bright smiling cheerfulness, which never seemed to know any change.

While attentive to the work of all the classes, he devoted himself particularly to the acquisition of

Hebrew, and to understand thoroughly the principles of biblical criticism. In the Hebrew class, then taught by the well-known Professor Tennant, he was recognised as the most advanced scholar, after one youth, who had devoted himself to the study of Oriental languages, and surprised every one by reading and translating the Hebrew Bible with perfect facility the first day the class met.

In biblical criticism, as might have been anticipated, from the turn of his mind and his great knowledge of the Greek language, Mr Robertson took peculiar interest; nor did any student understand, and apply as he did, the valuable lectures which were delivered by the Professor who at that time filled the chair of Biblical Criticism in St Andrews. There are some who yet remember the Greek exercise and addition read by Mr Robertson. It was on 1 Peter iii. 19, 20, "The spirits in prison,"—a subject no doubt purposely selected to test his powers—he acquitted himself so ably that the Professor was moved from the language of ordinary commendation to sustain his discourse with the highest approbation. From Dr Haldane, the venerable Principal of St Mary's College, to whom all his students are indebted for the thorough training he gave them, Mr Robertson not only received much kindly notice, he was honoured with his friendship, and distinguished by a personal regard, which continued long after the relation between them as professor and student had ceased.

In the month of March 1847, Mr Robertson concluded all his studies at St Andrews, and finally left college. No student, perhaps, ever left that university with a higher or more unblemished reputation; distinguished for the diligent and most successful prosecution of his studies, he was yet more distinguished for the excellence of his character, and his simple unassuming deportment. It has been said that no success is perfect without envy; but such was his humility, such the kindness of his manner, that his friends were almost his partisans; far from envying his success, they rejoiced in it as their own. And thus it was that, when he left the university, he had already laid deep and sure the foundation of his future eminence; thenceforward he ascended rapidly, and almost without effort, to the highest positions in the Church; and surely in the story of his early student life, thus briefly and imperfectly told, there is a lesson which should operate on every student who hears of it. In all that has been said, there is nothing extraordinary, nothing beyond the grasp of the diligent and the good, but an example the youngest scholar may imitate, and a success which the most friendless may attain.

During the whole period of his residence at St Andrews Mr Robertson continued to devote much time and attention to English composition. He was not one of those who believed in results without processes; on the contrary, he acted under the impression that no man, however eminent his abilities,

could attain to excellence in anything without diligent and persevering industry. He therefore took great pains with the formation of his style, finishing every exercise with care, and avoiding anything like hurried or slovenly composition, even when taking down or extending the college lectures. As an instance of his *preliminary* labours in this one direction, his achievement when attending Professor Gillespie's Saturday lectures on language may be given. "In this class* the taking of notes and extending them was prescribed as a voluntary exercise to those who aimed at improvement in composition. To reproduce the lectures from the notes taken by writing them anew, not *verbatim*, as they were delivered, but in the student's own style, with fresh illustrations, and original remarks, was the object of the course. The composing of a series of lectures, of which those delivered were the groundwork, was an exercise, in his view, of high importance and utility. At first he allowed his notes to lie over for weeks before he attempted the reconstruction of any of the lectures. In the meantime he selected a favourite author, whose style he admired, and copied off whole pages, that he might acquire familiarity with a good standard in the formation of sentences; he then proceeded to extend the notes with great care, until he had completed the series." It was in this way that he laid the foundation of his style, and was able, even in his first sermons, to

* Mr Mailler's narrative.

express his thoughts with so much vigour, elegance, and clearness.

He had now arrived at that period of his career when he was to be brought prominently before the public. In February 1848, about ten months after leaving St Mary's College, he received licence as a preacher of the gospel, and thus became qualified to receive a presentation to any vacant charge within the Church of Scotland. He preached his first sermon in the parish church of Dunning, for an old and intimate college friend, the Rev. Paton J. Gloag, then assistant and successor at Dunning, now minister of Blantyre. The text was, (Rev. xxi. 22,) "I saw no temple there." His friend, who heard the sermon, thus gives his impressions of it:—"The sermon struck me as peculiarly excellent. It exhibited a vigour of intellect, a copiousness and propriety of illustration, and an excellence of diction, which are seldom to be found in a young man; indeed, it had no trace of juvenility about it." The same qualities appeared in all the sermons which he preached at this time. He seemed to start from a point which most preachers never reach at all.

For his first appearances in public he prepared with much diligence and care. He understood thoroughly his position,—knew what was expected from him,—had estimated the power of first impressions; and it is an instance not merely of his ability, but of that strong good sense which ever distinguished him, that at every crisis of his career

he was found fully equal to the occasion, and even surpassed the expectations of his friends. The attention directed to the young preacher, and the high opinion formed of his character and abilities, was such, that on the parish of Mains, in the presbytery of Dundee, and county of Forfar, becoming vacant by the resignation of the late Dr Cannan, the committee of the congregation of Mains appointed to take steps for supplying the vacancy turned their thoughts to him as a suitable successor. Some of Mr Robertson's friends told him that his name was mentioned for Mains, and suggested to him that he would do well to use any influence he possessed in order to assist the movement in his favour, but he declined to forward his prospects by any effort or solicitations of his own. "With my inexperience," he said, "I cannot seek such a charge; but if it comes to me, I shall regard it as the call of Providence, and trust that God will fit me for the work to which He has summoned me." After making careful inquiries, the committee of the congregation of Mains requested Mr Robertson to preach before them; and accordingly he preached by arrangement, forenoon and afternoon, in the parish church of Liff, where the committee were present to hear him. The forenoon sermon delighted the committee. During the interval, one of the members of the congregation at Liff, who knew Mr Robertson, congratulated him, telling him the impression he had produced, and that the committee were particularly pleased that he had used *no paper*. "Well,"

he said, "I am glad you have mentioned this, for I am determined that I will accept no parish with an understanding that I am to use no paper. I am quite prepared to repeat the afternoon discourse; but I shall now read it, that the deputation may not be misled in any way." It was a characteristic instance of honesty and integrity. Fortunately for themselves, and the parish they represented, the deputation from Mains liked the afternoon sermon also, though it *was* read; and Mr Robertson was forthwith recommended to the Home Secretary as the choice of the parishioners of Mains. Before the presentation from the Crown was issued in his favour, Mr Robertson was asked to preach in the pulpit of St Andrew's church, Edinburgh, by the Rev. Dr Clark, one of the ministers of that church. He could not be ignorant how much depended on this visit to Edinburgh, and prepared for it with his usual diligence and care. There was sound judgment even in the choice of his text. It was Romans iii. 31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." And from these words he delivered one of the most able and finished sermons he ever wrote. The effect produced on his hearers by this first sermon in Edinburgh was great. It at once established him both with minister and congregation, and produced an impression which many subsequent appearances in the pulpit of St Andrew's church only confirmed. This impression, the result of the remarkable ability manifested in the discharge of his

public duties as a preacher, was strengthened by all that was seen and known of him in private. His amiable disposition and entire simplicity of manner exercised the same influence in Edinburgh as elsewhere: henceforward he numbered the ministers of St Andrew's church among his most attached friends; and already he began to be looked upon in influential quarters as a marked man, not only worthy to receive the presentation to Mains, but to occupy eventually a still more prominent position in the Church.

On the 26th day of September, little more than six months after he had received licence as a preacher of the gospel, Mr Robertson received ordination from the presbytery of Dundee, and was inducted into the pastoral charge of the united parishes of Mains and Strathmartine, and the following Sabbath he was introduced to his parishioners by the Rev. Dr Ritchie, minister of Longforgan, of which parish Mr Crichton had now been parochial schoolmaster for some years. Mr Crichton had always a welcome in his house for his former pupil, who had done him so much credit; and he was often found there during such spare time as he had at his command in the intervals of his attendance at college, or when he was not engaged in private teaching. It was at this time, and in this way, that he was first introduced to Dr Ritchie, who formed the same opinion of the excellent abilities and amiable character of the young student, which was universally entertained by all who knew him. How little did the older minister anticipate that day he in-

troduced his youthful brother to the congregation at Mains that he would live to preach his funeral sermon in the Cathedral Church of Glasgow, and join in the universal mourning occasioned by his death.

It was in the manse of Longforgan that the new minister of Mains was staying during the week of his ordination and introduction to his charge. As he was himself to preach on the afternoon of the Sabbath on which he was to be introduced, he took for his text Ezek. iii. 17-20: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." But, as he proceeded with the illustration of this subject, he was so much struck with its solemnity, that he came to his friend Dr Ritchie and said, "I cannot go on with this text; I feel that I cannot write and speak from it." And then, almost at the eleventh hour, he selected the text and wrote the sermon which stands first in this volume. It was the first discourse which he preached as minister of the parish of Mains. In reading this sermon one can see that he had not forgotten some of the thoughts suggested by the passage in Ezekiel.

Let no one so far misunderstand this anecdote of the change of texts as to suppose that Mr Robertson

shrunk from realising, to the fullest extent, his responsibility as a Christian minister: he only shrunk from stating that responsibility, and dwelling on it publicly, in what is perhaps the most forcible and awful language to be met with in the Bible. This reserve arose from the very depth and intensity of his feelings: had he felt less, he would have gone on; and this was characteristic of him throughout his ministry. It exercised its influence not only on his sermons, but on his ordinary discourse. There was in him always a reserve, not of manner—no one could be more frank and genial—but of deep, strong feeling, which he could not show. Gifted with an imaginative faculty seldom found united with such reasoning powers as he possessed, that faculty was kept under strict, almost severe control. Often in his sermons he touched on a singularly beautiful thought, and then passed away from it, as if he would not indulge his feelings. It was the same thing in his conversation. While he loved to speak with his more intimate friends on the things of the kingdom of heaven, and that in a tone of earnestness and solemnity not to be forgotten, he did not permit himself the frequent use of those sacred and solemn expressions which enter so largely into the discourse of some, and find so prominent a place in their correspondence. In him the principle of reverence was too deep to rise often to the surface. Evangelical phrases were seldom heard from him, for his was rather the life than the language of religion.

Once settled at Mains, Mr Robertson entered upon his duties with no ordinary earnestness and fidelity, and in a very short time endeared himself to all classes of the community. Wherever he went he met cordial welcome, and gradually he was surrounded by an attached circle, who loved him as their true friend, and honoured him as an able and faithful minister of Christ. One who knew him well thus writes of him at this time: "The people liked to see his face, and to hear his kindly voice, and enjoy his familiar conversation; for it was one of his peculiarities that he could talk on every one's subject. Rich and poor alike always gave him a hearty welcome, whether he visited them in the regular course of his ministrations, or called upon them on other occasions. Understanding thoroughly the requirements of a country parish, he adapted his work to the circumstances of his people, and endeavoured, by a Christian and consistent walk, to preach as much by his living example as by his weekly sermons."

In everything that related to education Mr Robertson took a deep interest; his own history and experience had enabled him, and had led him to form the most comprehensive and enlightened views on this great question. Those teachers with whom he was brought into contact, both in his own parish and beyond its limits, remember how thoroughly he understood their work, and how ready he was to assist with his kindly sympathy and just apprecia-

tion of their valuable labours. To the godly upbringing of the young Mr Robertson devoted much attention. As a mere youth, while living in Perth, and afterwards as a student at St Andrews, he had been distinguished as a Sabbath-school teacher, and now the parish of Mains reaped the benefits of his experience, so that, under his fostering care, the Sabbath school of Mains grew and prospered. So well were his exertions and success in this one direction understood and appreciated, that he was appointed convener of the committee on Sabbath schools within the Synod of Angus and Mearns, an office which he retained until translated to Glasgow. While Mr Robertson was peculiarly fitted to speak kindly and simply to the young, a sermon to Sabbath-school children as such, separating them into a class, and using a style of language and illustration supposed to be adapted to their capacity, was not a method of teaching agreeable to his views; but very often, in the course of his ordinary ministrations, he spoke such wise, deep words about children, as are not often heard from the pulpits of our land. In proof of this, one extract is given from a sermon preached at Mains in August 1850, when he had not completed the second year of his ministry. It will not only, it is believed, bear out what has been said above, but will serve as a specimen of his ordinary style of writing at this time. The text of this sermon is Zechariah iv. 10. After illustrating, with great vigour and clearness, the principle that great results

spring, under God, from small beginnings, he goes on to its applications. The first is, "The necessity for using great care and vigilance in the education of children," and thus he proceeds to vindicate this necessity. "In human life, childhood is pre-eminently the day of small things, but every one knows that the things which grow out of it are exceedingly great and exceedingly momentous. The welfare of the individual, both throughout time and in eternity, depends in no slight measure upon the training of his youth; and the prospects of society are bound up in the preparation which its rising members receive for the duties they will be called upon to perform. But I need not enlarge on the importance of education. On this point, if on any, all parties are agreed. For the present I wish rather to suggest it to you, that in a right education, there are certain matters which many esteem very small and very insignificant, which deserve, however, to be very carefully watched and regulated. To select for your children the best teaching that your means will allow, to send them to the best schools, where the greatest amount of knowledge is most effectively communicated, forms naturally an object of your solicitude. But how many are there who acknowledge the value of education, and are careful enough to procure the best teaching in their power, and yet neglect altogether, or very slightly regard, the small items of the daily conduct of their children, as, for example, their amusements and their talk? Nevertheless it is the fact, that even

the sports of boyhood have germs of great things in them ; and the habits that may be formed, and the dispositions that may be cultivated in so trifling a sphere as that of childish games and recreations, being moral habits, are of more moment often, towards the formation of the character of the future man, than the simple, intellectual arguments which are made at school, and which are too frequently regarded as the sole matter of importance in education. To allay the fretfulness of a child, or to afford him amusement, it is not uncommon to relate to him something which does not consist with truth ; and yet, small and venial as we consider this to be, it strongly tends to diminish that reverence for veracity which ought always to be cultivated, and to produce a habit of falsehood, than which few habits can be more injurious. We laugh at the small cunning by which a boy outwits and overreaches his companions, but thus we encourage that most blamable disposition which, when it comes to fill a wider sphere, may make a fraudulent and uncandid man. The same maliciousness which may amuse us, when displayed by the young, will grow, if unchecked, into a revengeful and cruel nature. The same selfishness which may be exhibited in a boy's intercourse with his playfellows may produce in after life the utter destruction of all kind and charitable feeling. There is no more certain way to foster any bad propensity than to treat it with lightness when shown by youth. It matters not that the harm which results from it may

be little at the time, for the evil is not to be measured by its apparent present dimensions and outward ill fruits, but by the great and crying injury which it does to the character, and by the magnitude of the ills which proceed from it when it operates in the wider arena of mature life. Let not, then, the guardians of the young despise the day of these very small things; let them neither neglect the little vices nor the little virtues of their charge, for in truth these virtues and these vices are not themselves little, but only the field in which they are displayed."

During the second summer after his settlement at Mains, Mr Robertson's health was seriously affected for a period of several months, and the symptoms were such as to occasion much anxiety to his friends.

While no one could be more temperate than he was, he had never taken any care of his health, was not particular to an hour or two when he took his meals, and never acted as if there was any occasion for exercise. Even as a boy, it has been told how he remained at his book when others were at play, and how his holidays were not spent at games or out-door amusements, but reading in his favourite corner in his mother's room; habits so exclusively studious and sedentary were not favourable to the formation of his constitution, and gradually they produced in him a certain amount of physical inertness, the result probably of languor of circulation, which now began to manifest itself. During the summer and autumn of 1850, he suffered from many distress-

ing symptoms, but chiefly from a pain in the left side, the nature of which he never could describe; harassing him during the whole week with ever-recurring sensations of anxiety and restlessness, it was usually most acute during the Sabbath-day, and often, at this time, he was only able to get through the service by clasping his hand firmly on his left side. His looks at last alarmed his friends, and he was induced to cease from his labours for a time, and to seek for restored health by rest and care. During the summer and autumn of 1850, he visited some friends in different parts of the country, but for a time with little benefit. At last he was recommended to consult one of the most eminent of the Edinburgh medical practitioners, the late Dr John Scott, and by his judicious treatment he was apparently quite restored to his former health and strength. There were occasional intimations, however, that the malady, whatever it was, was not wholly removed, though it showed itself seldom, and in a much less acute and distressing form.

While rising in reputation as a preacher, and in esteem as an excellent and faithful parish minister, Mr Robertson was invited to address the Lay Association of the Church of Scotland, on the evening of the Friday after the Assembly of 1853 had been convened. He was asked to advocate the claims of the Education and Home Mission Schemes. The speech he delivered on this occasion was truly admirable; it was almost the only occasion on which

he spoke at length before the clergy and laity of the Church, for he seldom spoke more than a few words in the Assembly, and in Church courts at all times he preferred to leave the speaking to others. Of the speech before the Lay Association, a corrected copy was published, by special request, in the *Glasgow Constitutional* of 28th May 1853. As this paper is not accessible, a brief extract is subjoined from the opening of the speech. After a few kindly and happy remarks, that the request to advocate the claims of two schemes must be understood as a gentle hint to be sparing of the time of the meeting, he proceeds, addressing himself to the chairman: "But, Sir, I do not suppose that a desire to save time is the only motive you have had for connecting the two schemes. You have done so, I fancy, because of the intimate alliance you have perceived to exist between the objects they have severally in view. Indeed, Sir, they have only one object—an object most patriotic and most Christian—to elevate the condition of our destitute fellow-citizens, by bestowing upon them those blessings which are unspeakably the most precious to man, whether you regard him as an inhabitant of this world, or an inheritor of immortality. This is an object which must command the approbation, the sympathy, and the cordial support of all who wish well to their country and their kind. And this is the object towards which the Education Scheme and the Home Mission Scheme are equally means; yes, and means so very closely connected,

that either of them, apart from the other, would be quite insufficient for the object in view. Knowledge without worship, the school without the church, the head without the heart, light without heat, can no more make a virtuous community than the cold glitter of an arctic sun can fertilise the ice fields of the frozen zone. And, on the other hand, I do fervently hope that the days are for ever gone by, when worship without knowledge, the church without the school, a blind, unintelligent, formal service shall be thought a worthy homage to be paid to the God of light. The connexion of church and school is an old idea in Scotland—one of those old ideas which form our justification, when we speak so highly, as we often do, regarding the wisdom of our fathers. We have discovered many things in this generation, but the connexion between knowledge and worship, and the necessity for the union of both, in order to social prosperity, are not among them. The principle that the church and school ought to go together is at least as old as the Church of Scotland. To divide the country into parishes of a manageable size, and to erect in each not only a house of prayer, but a place of education—not only a sanctuary, but a seminary—that was the principle, the sound Protestant principle, the enlightened social principle, on which the Church of Scotland was established. I trust we shall hand down to our posterity both the principle itself and the institutions based upon it; the principle intact, but the institutions extended and

improved."—It is to be regretted that one who could speak thus was not oftener heard beyond the limited sphere of a country parish. Had there but been in him more of the restlessness of ambition, something of impatience to be estimated aright, and recognised for the man he was, we would have been the better for it now; but the loss is ours, not his.

Mr Robertson's great attainments as a mathematician and classical scholar, his extensive acquaintance with modern languages and literature, might, had he been willing, have conducted him to eminence in many departments of intellectual effort and literary activity; but he was content to devote himself to the duties of his parish with a singleness of purpose worthy of all honour. While he did not cease to maintain his scholarship and extend his reading, his powers as a thinker and a scholar were chiefly manifested and exercised in the composition of sermons. His ordinary method of preparing for the pulpit was, after selecting a text, to think over it during the greater part of the week, never losing sight of it, when going about his ordinary parochial work, or even when engaged in conversation the most remote from the train of thought he was pursuing. Then, when the subject was fully arranged in his mind, he sat down to write, very often not until Saturday morning. There was often a difficulty with the first few sentences, which he would arrange and rearrange many times; but when once fairly commenced, he wrote with great ease and rapidity, seldom altering a

word; and it was his custom not to stop, if possible, until he had finished his discourse, as he was accustomed to say that those sermons were best which he had completed at a sitting.

In Glasgow, amidst his numerous engagements, and the frequent interruptions to which he was subjected, the sermon was seldom commenced until late on Saturday, and often it was far on in the morning before it was completed. It was also not unusual for him, along with his weekly discourses, to have in his mind some other subject, which he revolved much longer, and wrote out when he found a favourable opportunity. He was not one of those preachers whose reputation was founded on a few sermons, prepared and elaborated with the utmost care, and continually reproduced. His mind was always occupied upon the great truths it was his office to proclaim. He had always something to tell his people,—something he had learned and felt himself, and wished them to learn and feel also. To the end of his ministry he continued to write new sermons. Very few of those delivered at the Mains were reproduced in Glasgow, until they had been thoroughly revised, and in many instances entirely re-written. To him there was such a life and freshness about new sermons that it was only under unusual pressure that he preached the same discourse a second time. He had few of those gifts and graces of oratory which make a powerful though transient impression on the multitude. He

used very few gestures, and those he did employ were neither energetic nor graceful. He read with considerable closeness; and, above all, his voice, though good, was neither sonorous nor powerful. And yet, wherever he went, particularly when he preached to an intellectual and cultivated audience, he produced an impression not to be forgotten, which was confirmed and strengthened the more frequently he was heard. Always earnest and reverent, his manner was sometimes deeply impressive. Often, too, there was a peculiar solemnity about his look, as if he knew and felt that, while declaring his Master's message, he stood upon holy ground; and perhaps, for *sustained* excellence, there was nothing equal to his sermons throughout the Church of Scotland. It has been already noticed, that Mr Robertson read his discourses with considerable closeness; but while this was the case, he had great mastery of his subject at all times, and could show it on an emergency. On one occasion, when about to preach in the pulpit of a friend, he accidentally left his manuscript in his room as he was leaving to come to church. Discovering the mistake when going to the pulpit, a messenger was sent in haste for the missing document. He returned just as the preliminary services were concluded, and what seemed the sermon was handed to the minister. He, too, from the appearance, thought all was right; but, after announcing his text, and turning to the document, it proved *blank paper*. Some unused sermon paper had been

beside the sermon, and in his haste the messenger had made the mistake. Mr Robertson had only a moment to decide ; but without hesitation or difficulty, he proceeded as if nothing had gone wrong. Nor would any one have known what had taken place, had he not himself told what had happened in his own kindly and humorous way.

Immediately adjoining to the parish of Mains is the parish of Liff and Benvie. It has been already told how, in the pulpit of this parish church, Mr Robertson preached two sermons very memorable in his history. After his settlement at Mains, he was privileged to know and enjoy much friendly intercourse with the venerable minister of Liff, the late Dr Addison. So well were Dr Addison's eminent gifts understood and appreciated, that, had he chosen, he might have occupied the moderator's chair—the highest dignity the Church has to offer—but he did not care thus to be drawn forth from his retirement, or to occupy a position which yet, in many respects, he was singularly well fitted to fill ; for he found his happiness in his family, in the duties of his parish, and amidst a circle of friends who loved and honoured him. For a long series of years Dr Addison had preached in the East Church of Dundee on the Monday after the communion Sabbath, where his services were deservedly held in the highest esteem ; but after Dr Addison's death the minister of the East Church fixed upon Mr Robertson to conduct the services so long connected with the honoured name of

Dr Addison. It was no ordinary trial to succeed such a man; no ordinary man could have filled the place of one of the most accomplished preachers in the Church; but Mr Robertson proved himself every way equal to the occasion, and until his removal to Glasgow he continued to officiate regularly on Monday after the communion in the East Church. Never, perhaps, was he heard to more advantage than at these times; gradually his preaching became one of the features of the communion season; by not a few his appearance in the pulpit was eagerly waited for: nor was it the usual Monday audience that collected on those occasions, but such an assembly as is only too seldom seen on the day after the communion Sabbath. Mingled with the congregation of the East Church were to be seen strangers belonging to other denominations, and not a few ministers, some of whom came from a distance just to hear Mr Robertson preach. No one in the congregation more thoroughly appreciated or more truly enjoyed these discourses than the minister of the East Church, the venerable and excellent Dr Adie, whose memory is yet dear to his friends. Among his many estimable qualities, there was about Dr Adie a singular generosity of character. Quick to discern excellence, wherever or whenever it was exhibited, he was not slow to acknowledge and proclaim it, even by depreciating himself. Many a youthful minister was encouraged by his kind and hearty expression of approval, for his was not that

littleness of mind which rigidly associates superiority with a certain period of life. From the first hour of their acquaintance he had been deeply and strongly impressed with the remarkable abilities and truly amiable character of his youthful neighbour at the Mains, and there began between them a lasting attachment, founded on mutual respect and esteem. Of Mr Robertson's sermons Dr Adie would occasionally speak in terms of admiration, the expression of which still dwells with those who heard them. "It's humbling, sir," he would say to some of those with whom he was intimate, "it's humbling to feel one's self outpreached by a boy,"—a quaint expression of feeling, but it was as sincere as it was unselfish. It came, too, from one who was no ordinary judge, who had gained the respect of all who knew him for his solid attainments, his honourable character, and the manner in which he continued to the end of a long and useful life to discharge all the duties of a Christian minister.

It is much to be regretted that most of the sermons thus preached by Mr Robertson in the East Church were accidentally destroyed at the time of his translation to Glasgow. This, of course, has narrowed and made difficult the choice of sermons for the first part of this volume.

Mr Robertson had not been long at Mains when his fame began to spread throughout the Church, and various attempts were made to induce him to leave Mains for more prominent spheres of useful-

ness; but for many years he declined all such offers, and never entertained any proposal to leave his first parish, until, on the death of the Rev. Dr Clark, of St Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, the congregation of that important charge turned their thoughts and wishes to Mr Robertson, as a fit and proper successor to the respected minister of whose services they had been deprived. Before Mr Robertson would entertain the overtures which were made to him, he took a step which places in a strong light the integrity of his character. Remembering the serious illness from which he had suffered, and not being assured that it was so thoroughly removed as to permit him to undertake the duties of a new and more onerous charge, he went quietly over to Edinburgh, and, explaining the symptoms of his case to one of the most eminent members of the medical profession, he got himself carefully and minutely examined; for he was resolved, if there were any lingering symptoms of ill-health, to remain in the comparative ease and seclusion of his country parish, to the duties of which he had found himself every way equal. The result of this examination, however, was entirely satisfactory. He was pronounced in perfect health, and so at this time he seemed to be; he therefore felt himself free to entertain the proposal which had been made to him, and to contemplate the probability of being at last separated from the Mains. The question was not with him soon or easily settled; he loved his parish, and his people, and his neighbours, and he knew

they returned his affection ; he was fond too of the country and rural pursuits, and had learned to take great delight in gardening and cultivating flowers. Personal inclination was all on the side of Mains, but the repeated calls which had been given to him, and the pressing representations in this particular case, led him to think that it was his duty to the Church to go to Edinburgh, and, accordingly, at one time he had promised, and was pledged to go. It is not necessary here to detail at length what led Mr Robertson to terminate the engagement he had made. St Andrew's Church was a collegiate charge, and it was chiefly, if not entirely, owing to two debates and decisions in the Town Council and Presbytery of Edinburgh, on collegiate charges, that Mr Robertson finally resolved not to go to Edinburgh ; and such was the strength of the affection which bound him to the Mains, that the failure of the negotiations for his translation, far from being a source of disappointment, seemed to remove a weight from his heart ; he was more than content to remain among his people and his friends.

Though the negotiations which seemed at one time to point to Mr Robertson's translation to Edinburgh were terminated, he was not to be left much longer at the Mains. Towards the end of the year 1857, the Cathedral Church, Glasgow, became vacant by the death of Principal Macfarlan, and Mr Robertson was invited to undertake the duties of that important charge, and become, what is called, the first

minister of Glasgow. There could be no stronger testimony to the high opinion so universally entertained of his ability and worth, than these successive and wholly unsolicited offers of the best and most influential livings in the Church of Scotland. It was difficult for him to withstand such repeated calls, or to avoid seeing in them an indication that it was his duty to quit his comparative seclusion, and accept a more prominent position in the Church. The final determination which he took to go to Glasgow was owing to his sense of duty; had he consulted his inclinations only, he would have been, as he said in his parting address to his people, "well content that his lot for life should have been cast in this valley. Following," he added, "as I think, and as I believe, if all could be told you, you would agree with me in thinking, a *manifest* leading of Providence, I am about to enter upon another sphere of labour. I shall do so with fear and trembling. I desire to do so in utter self-distrust, and simple faith in God."

It was in this spirit that he left Mains and entered upon his work in Glasgow; but the great city did not shut out the remembrance of the sequestered country parish. Very dear to him was always that "valley" of which he spoke, and the people among whom he had lived and laboured for ten years, a ministry the fruits of which will long remain. When enfeebled by illness, six months before he died, one of his last efforts was to come over

from St Andrews, to see once more the old manse and church and parish, and as many of the elders and people as he could. Those whom he then met yet remember that last time they saw his face; for if he loved the parish and the people of the Mains, he was by them beloved again with no common affection. It was no wonder it was so. In the touching words of his successor at the Mains, spoken to a sorrowing congregation the Sabbath after Dr Robertson's funeral, "very gentle he was among you, very loving and true of heart, apparently all-unconscious of his own great power and increasing reputation, and retaining to the last a simple relish for our country pleasures and our common things. When he left you, I obtained from him a list of those whom he thought I should lose no time in visiting as a minister. They were all poor persons, widows, aged, lonely, bereaved ones, the sick and dying; and as he named them to me one by one, he had for each some pitying word." "His quiet charities," said another who knew him well, "live after him in the grateful minds of many of his old parishioners." How extensive these charities were was little suspected, and cannot now be known; but in his latter years at the manse, conversing with an old and intimate friend, he said, that he had come to think that he ought to devote a tenth of his income to charity, and that he had been trying for some time to do so.

Mr Robertson preached his last sermon as minister of Mains on the 20th of June 1858, at the dispensa-

tion of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and took farewell of his people in the concluding address at the close of the services. This concluding address is included in the present volume, and forms a fitting close to the first division of the sermons now published.

The following week Mr Robertson was inducted into his new charge in Glasgow. He was accompanied on the occasion by some of the Mains parishioners and a few intimate friends, who witnessed the cordial and unanimous welcome which he received from his future people. The University of St Andrews took the opportunity of bestowing upon him the degree of D.D., an appropriate recognition of his eminent attainments and success as a teacher of theology. And thus, at the age of thirty-four, he found himself in possession of the highest dignity the university could bestow, and as distinguished preferment as the Church had to offer; and this without possessing any influence, or using any solicitation.

Speaking of his translation to Glasgow, and before he entered upon any of the duties of his new position, Dr Robertson had said, "It is like entering a new world to me." From the first he understood how great the change must be, a change not merely in the amount, but in the very nature of the work which would devolve upon him. He had to conduct two services every Sabbath-day in the Cathedral, which was used as the parish church; and at the conclusion

of the afternoon diet of worship, he had to enter on another service in the Chapter House, where it was the custom to baptize children at the conclusion of the stated services on the Lord's day. There were always several children to baptize, and a small congregation of friends and relations in attendance. This service, though comparatively short, was peculiarly exhausting at such a time. If such was Dr Robertson's work *within* the walls of the Cathedral church, *without* and around these walls there were other labours awaiting him on every day of the week, making continual demands on his attention and his time, and awakening the warmest sympathies of his heart.

He could not walk through the streets, and lanes, and closes of his parish, numbering 16,000 souls—many of them among the poorest and most ignorant of Glasgow—without feeling that he had a great duty to them, that he was not merely the preacher, but the pastor too; not merely ordained to discourse in his beautiful church to a well-dressed and educated congregation, but to go out into the highways and hedges and gather some of the lost sheep into his Master's fold. From the first this was an object which he had set before him, and which was peculiarly dear to his heart, far more dear than to be renowned as a great preacher, or to be listened to by admiring crowds. The manner in which he sought to attain this object, and to organise his schemes for the benefit of his parish, was characteristic of that sound good sense and practical sagacity, for which

he was distinguished throughout life. He did not begin in haste, did not act as if he thought no good had been doing till his arrival, as if he had found everything wrong, and must lose no time in setting things to right; on the contrary, he accepted and honoured all the good, and all the power for good, he saw around him, while at the same time he set himself deliberately and quietly to understand thoroughly the wants of his charge, that he might be the better able to devise the best methods for meeting these wants. During the autumn and winter after his induction, his plans were quietly maturing, and were founded chiefly on his own personal examination and inquiry, though not without taking advantage of the experience and advice of others. He saw that the parish naturally divided itself into four districts, and it was his plan to establish a mission in the most neglected parts of each of these districts, and to carry out this idea gradually as his means permitted. In the spring of 1859, having secured the services of his first missionary, he began to carry out his system in one of the four districts, known as the Drygate district, inhabited by perhaps the poorest and most ignorant of his parishioners, among whom were to be found all those sins and sorrows so continually associated with ignorance and with poverty. They were not only visited; Sunday evening services were held in a school-room in the district for their benefit, and soon the services were crowded. It was the object of this mission, and these services, to bring

out those who, from poverty or other causes, never entered the house of God, to preach the gospel to them, and gradually to bring them within the pale of the Church. From this district alone in a short time 100 members were added to the communion roll. As the Sabbath evening meetings continued to prosper, the following year a Sabbath school was opened in this district, and was soon numerously attended by poor and neglected children, who had no one to instruct them in the knowledge of the truth "as it is in Jesus." This mission and Sabbath school still continue to prosper and improve. The last "Report on Missions, &c., within the High Church Parish," states, that in the Drygate district the Sabbath evening meetings are largely attended: sometimes they have been so crowded that there has not been seat accommodation for all; and that the Sabbath school has an average attendance of 177 scholars, with 16 teachers and a superintendent. Another fact connected with this mission deserves to be recorded. It has already been told how, out of this poor and once neglected district, one hundred communicants were added to the roll as members of the parish church. Last winter, by the desire of many of their number, a box was placed at the door, in order to afford those in better circumstances an opportunity of assisting their less favoured brethren; and out of the money thus contributed, the missionary at present presiding over the Drygate district has often been enabled to relieve the distress of the sick con-

nected with the meeting. There is surely something very touching and very hopeful in the charity of these poor people, and their thoughtfulness for each other's welfare. This mission owed its *origin* entirely to Dr Robertson, and its success was also very much due to his fostering care: often he visited these Sabbath evening meetings, and preached himself when he could. The poor people to whom he discoursed not only knew him, but *loved* him; for, after preaching to them, he would go among them, and speak to them by name, for he knew the names and histories of many; and when he was taken away from them by death, by none was his departure more sincerely mourned than by these, "the little ones" of his flock, whom he had been the means of calling out of darkness into light: some of the most touching expressions of grief for his early loss came from them.

After reclaiming, as it were, one district, Dr Robertson went on to another—the second or western district of the parish—and pursued there the same system, with results equally encouraging. For this district, in the summer of 1860, the services of another missionary were engaged, a second Sunday evening meeting was established, and another Sabbath school opened. Since the summer of 1860, sixty or seventy communicants have been added to the church, and about two hundred children are on the roll of the Sabbath school as the fruits of this mission.

In October 1863 Dr Robertson engaged an assist-

ant, not only to join him in his own labours, but that he should ultimately preside over another and *third* mission, in the southern district of the parish; but it was just at this point that Dr Robertson's career was interrupted, and his energies prostrated by the distressing illness from which he never recovered. Had he been spared, there can be little doubt not only that this third mission would have been as prosperous as the others, but that he would have completed his plan, by establishing a *fourth* mission in the remaining district of his parish. His idea was that, with a staff of four missionaries he could work his parish as he thought it should be wrought, and he looked forward ultimately to building a working man's church in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral, and there uniting the comparatively small congregations which had been gradually formed in the different districts, the services to be conducted by the missionaries alternately, while he was himself to occupy the pulpit once a fortnight. Perhaps the day may not be far distant when his plans will be carried into effect. There could be no better memorial of him in Glasgow than the building of the working man's church in his parish. The erection of it was one great object of his ambition, not only for itself, but as the sign that his plans for the organisation and thorough working of his charge had been carried out, and were in active operation. Exclusive of the site, it was estimated that about £1000 would be sufficient to erect the church, and at the time of Dr Robertson's death a

fourth part of the amount (£250) had been subscribed.

In addition to these missionary labours and plans, Dr Robertson also originated a clothing society and a penny savings' bank. Both these societies have been and continue to be the source of much good ; he continued, moreover, his own private charities in a quiet and unostentatious way. "To the sick," writes one of his missionaries, the Rev. W. Macvicar, "to the sick he was very attentive, and if there was poverty as well as trouble, he could not leave without putting his hand in his pocket, and then turning in a quiet way to one of the inmates. He did not value money ; he gave freely—in fact, I thought too freely."

While Dr Robertson's translation from Mains to Glasgow was, as he said himself, like entering into a new world to him, there can be no doubt that ere long he not only entered into, but enjoyed his new sphere of action and of duty. He found at his first coming not a few who were prepared to aid him in his work, and he gradually won upon all with whom he came in contact, till at last he was surrounded by an attached circle of friends and parishioners, who would have done almost anything for him. The circle of his friends, indeed, was always widening ; men received impressions of his goodness and his power, the source of which it would not be easy to define, till in the end it is believed that no one exercised a more extensive influence on the minds of ministers and laymen throughout the Church. And

yet, though no one possessed a larger number of attached friends, no one sought them less. He won upon all men by being what he was; he could not, indeed, more effectually secure friendship and affection than by remaining himself.

One unfailing source of admiration and delight to Dr Robertson was the venerable and beautiful Cathedral church. He had always an eye for architectural beauty and grandeur, and felt himself at once elevated and solemnised by the contemplation of it. He was proud of the noble structure which he was privileged to call his own church, and witnessed during his ministry, with the most lively interest, its gradual restoration. He saw it almost every week growing in beauty, as one magnificent stained glass window after another was inaugurated, till at last the work was completed, and he found himself surrounded by a "dim religious light;" and though he was by no means so easily reached through the ear as through the eye, he was not insensible to the singular charm of the singing in the Cathedral, where the sound is so refined by the lofty roof and towering pillars, and where the harmonies seem to gain some strange hidden power to arrest and satisfy the listening ear. It was a great pleasure to Dr Robertson to show the Cathedral to some of his old friends, and none were more welcome to him or received a more cordial welcome than any of his former parishioners from Mains. They were occasionally to be seen mingled with the congregation of the Cathedral church, when

business had perhaps brought them to Glasgow, or when staying with the minister as his guests and visitors. On one occasion Dr Robertson had a visit from one of the most noted characters of the parish of Mains, the old beadle, Walter Nicoll. He had often been kindly asked to come, and at last he made it out, for he was sincerely attached to his former minister, who in his turn showed him much kindness, and thoroughly appreciated Walter's quaint and peculiar humour. The church of the Mains has been called, by one who knows it as well as any man, "one of the ugliest churches externally that can well be imagined;" and when Walter Nicoll took his seat in the Cathedral it was supposed that the Mains would go down to zero in his opinion. It was a new thing to Walter to attend *unprofessionally* in any church; doubtless he watched with critical eye the demeanour of his brother functionary, as he "brought up the books," and made mental notes thereon; as also how he let the minister out when the services were over. At the conclusion of his labours for the day, Dr Robertson, wishing to hear Walter's opinion, and to enjoy the impression which had doubtless been made upon him by the Cathedral, said, "Well, Walter, this is a finer church than the Mains." Walter, not the man to give up the Mains on any terms, promptly answered, "I'm no sae sure o' that." "I am surprised to hear that," responded the minister; "have you any fault to find with the Cathedral?" "Ye see, sir," quoth Walter, who had doubtless been

studying the subject, "Ye see, sir, she's just useless big; she's got nae laft, and she's sair fashed wi' thae pillars." After this there was clearly nothing to be made of Walter, whose practical genius had so successfully vindicated the Mains kirk at the expense of the Cathedral.

Shortly after his settlement in Glasgow in the year 1860, Dr Robertson was appointed by the Duke of Montrose his assessor in the University Court, and henceforward he gave much of his time and attention to College affairs, and took a deep interest in everything belonging to the University. Before he received this appointment, many of the professors and not a few of the students were numbered among his hearers, and had early learned to esteem him as their minister. But now it was to be known how well fitted he was to deal with the great question of education in its highest form, and to administer along with his colleagues the important patronage which devolved upon the University Court. When a vacancy occurred in the Divinity chair in Glasgow College, Dr Robertson might have received the appointment could he have made up his mind, or seen it to be his duty to have resigned his connexion with his parish, and have devoted his whole time to the duties of a professor of divinity. But this he resolved not to do: his pastoral labours had a great attraction for him; his work in his parish was proceeding so prosperously, and was growing so steadily under his eye, that he could not forsake it.

There was also for him an attraction in the noble and beautiful Cathedral church, whose pulpit he loved to occupy, where his ministrations were becoming daily more acceptable, and where he could not but be sensible many were attracted by his preaching, whose minds it was of no little consequence to influence and confirm in the impressions which they had already received.

In addition to the other labours which devolved upon him, Dr Robertson consented to become convener of the India Mission committee, and entered into the details of this important mission with his wonted assiduity. At the very time he was doing so much for the neglected and untaught masses in his own parish, he found leisure to think and plan for the spread of the gospel in far distant lands. Those who met with him in committee, or who corresponded with him on the subject of the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, will remember how much his heart was in this work, and how much good sense and business talent he brought to bear on the general policy of the mission, and the best means for making it thoroughly efficient. Though he was not long spared to retain his convenership, it was long enough to leave the impress of his mind on the future management and working of the committee. In the first report which he drew up for the Assembly, a report which he was not able to read himself, he submitted to the Assembly the necessity of having the mission stations "strongly manned," in order that

they might be really and permanently effective. The concluding part of this report expressed the decided and strong conviction of the committee "that there ought to be at *least* two ordained European missionaries at each station, besides European teachers when necessary. Unless this is so, sickness, or any other contingency which may withdraw the missionary from his station, at once paralyses the mission." In order to this plan of having the five mission stations strongly manned, it was submitted to the Assembly, as an alternative, either to increase largely the contributions to the Indian Mission scheme, or to concentrate her missions,—the committee at the same time expressing an earnest hope that the former alternative would be chosen by the Church. Such *was* the choice of the Church: owning the necessity, so plainly stated, of having the mission stations more "strongly manned," it was resolved by the Assembly to impress on every minister and every parish the duty of contributing more largely to the funds of the committee for propagating the gospel in India. How well, how ably, and with what gratifying results, this resolution has been carried out by the present convener of the India Mission committee is well known. May the new energy and life infused into this noble Christian enterprise long continue; and, in the last words of Dr Robertson's report, let us work on "in the spirit of love and patience."

In addition to his pastoral and congregational work, Dr Robertson took an active interest in the various

charities throughout Glasgow; and many were the demands made upon his time and his influence in connexion with them. Nor ought the attention which he bestowed on the four schools within his own parish, and on many others beyond its bounds, to be overlooked. His presence, his visits, were always welcome. He understood children, and there was something about him which always attracted them. While he was at home amidst the business of the University Court, he could enter with perfect simplicity and relish into the details of an elementary school. It is told of him, that when he visited the schools attended by the children of the humbler classes, the scholars would show by their countenances they were delighted to see him. He would put questions to them, speak to them kindly and cheerfully, and give them little presents. "They were very fond of him." In all this there was no unbending, no lowering of himself to their capacities. It was in him. There was a part of his mind that always responded to children, just as the same mind could influence and attract the most thoughtful men. In truth, it was the variety and harmony of his powers, the goodness and gentleness, the beautiful simplicity, yet manly strength of his character, which made him what he was; he was not, he could not be, represented by sermons, or expressed in any *one* thing he did.

In the month of October 1862, an important change took place in Dr Robertson's domestic life. He was united in marriage to Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of

the Rev. Dr Cook of St Andrews; and now it seemed as if, under the happiest and most favourable circumstances, many happy years of added usefulness and prosperity were before him. Such were the fond anticipations of his many friends. But it had been otherwise ordered by Him who so often, by His mysterious dispensations, reminds us of what He said to His disciples, the night before He laid down His life, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." At an early period of the year 1863, Dr Robertson's health showed symptoms of giving way. Pains in the left side, with attacks of dizziness and breathlessness, occasioned much anxiety to his friends, and on his pulse falling from its ordinary state to twenty-five or thirty beats in a minute, it became evident that it was necessary for him to give up for a time all his labours, and to seek restoration to health by rest and retirement. During the summer of 1863, he seemed to have made considerable progress to recovery. The month of October again found him occupying his pulpit in the Cathedral, and until the month of May 1864 he continued to preach once nearly every Sabbath.

He was not, however, restored to health. It was only his powers of endurance, and anxious desire still to be doing, which carried him through the winter; often he suffered from distressing attacks of prostration and weakness; nor did any of the remedies which were used succeed in bringing his pulse to a satisfactory state. The return of summer again saw him

compelled to desist from all duty; and on the earnest representations of his medical advisers, he applied to the Presbytery of Glasgow for a year's leave of absence, an application which was at once granted, with many expressions of sympathy and cordial wishes for his restoration to his former health and strength. Dr Robertson then retired from Glasgow to St Andrews, to the house of his father-in-law. It was most painful for him thus to be separated a second time from his work, and from the people and the place he so truly loved, but he resigned himself to the necessity without murmuring—no word of repining came from his lips. Neither the depressing influence of sickness and suffering, nor the disappointment of his enforced inaction, could cloud his cheerfulness, or ruffle his temper. Hitherto he had been singularly prosperous—the world had smiled upon him; but he was now to show that the source of his tranquillity was within himself. It was not given by the world, and the world could not take it away. During the summer and autumn of 1864, Dr Robertson formed many plans, with the view of making himself useful in the field of literature, should he be for any long period prevented from resuming his ministerial duties. Some of these plans had not only begun to take shape in his mind—their execution was even partly commenced, when he was removed. He was spared, however, to prepare for the press a volume of "Pastoral Counsels," which have now been for some months before the public, and

which are, it is believed, growing in estimation, as their singular beauty of thought and grace of expression begins to be known. Though these "Pastoral Counsels" were prepared under very trying circumstances, yet, as has been well and beautifully said of them, "They are enough to show how much Christian candour, comprehensive thoughtfulness, sound practical judgment, imaginative sensibility, and literary culture the Church has lost in their author. The mind which these "Counsels" exhibit seems to be the very mind most needed by the Church in the present time—a mind prospective, yet conservative, recognising what was good in the past, and yet what may be necessary for the future—a mind sure in its central convictions, yet broad in its sympathies, cautious in its judgments, yet hopeful in its aspirations."*

During the autumn of 1864, Dr Robertson's illness increased, and assumed a more acute and alarming form than it had ever done previously; and though he rallied from successive and severe attacks in a manner which showed that he was possessed of no ordinary vitality, it became manifest that he would never again be restored to active duty. How anxiously, how affectionately, he was watched over in St Andrews by his wife, and those most near and dear to him, it is unnecessary to say. Nothing was wanting that affection could provide, or skill devise. The house of Dr Robertson's father-in-law at St An-

* Principal Tulloch, in *Church of Scotland Missionary Record*, February 1, 1865.

drews was a centre to which the thoughts and sympathies of many friends were directed. The inquiries made at this time, the letters written, manifested the warmth of that affection of which Dr Robertson was the object, and made known how many earnest wishes and fervent prayers were uttered for his recovery and restoration to his friends and the Church. It was not to be. The Lord was about to say, "It is enough." The second week of the new year of 1865 was to witness the end. During the whole of his illness, Dr Robertson had never ceased to think and plan for his parish in Glasgow. In addition to letters which were printed in the summer and autumn of 1864, he had maintained a correspondence with many of the sick and afflicted of his people. In the first week of 1865, he wrote a short but touching letter to his congregation. It has been published in the second edition of the "Pastoral Counsels." The object of this letter was to suggest a text for the year, the meaning and blessedness of which it should be the object of those to whom he wrote to realise. That text was, "Looking unto Jesus." He had himself realised the meaning and the blessedness of it in the midst of trial; he was now going to realise it in the midst of glory; for the same week that he had written thus, he was seized with an acute paroxysm of illness, against which he struggled for two or three days, but his strength had been so much reduced, that he was unable to rally as he had done under several previous attacks, and at

length, on the 9th of January, at 10 o'clock P.M., he breathed his last. "Looking unto Jesus!" What can console us better than to think that such were the last words of his ministry, almost the last words of his life? He has himself told us that the first and the last sermons he preached were from the text, "We are ambassadors for Christ," but he lived to preach another, and to speak the ambassador's message, in these words, good words, as he said himself, whether for a year of joy or a year of sadness. "Looking unto Jesus." What thought can better comfort us than this? Yes, there is one other. He is now himself looking unto Jesus, not amidst the clouds of trial and the dimness of this world, but amidst the light and glory of everlasting day. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Though the tidings of Dr Robertson's death were not wholly unexpected, yet when it was known that he had indeed passed away, there were many who felt painfully how little they had realised the sad truth that his end was so near. It was difficult to think that he was indeed gone for ever, and that we should see his face and hear his voice no more. Wherever the announcement was made there was but one feeling of deep sorrow, extending not merely to his congregation and immediate friends, but shared in by a wide circle far beyond those with whom he had been most closely connected, and by whom he had been most intimately known. How large a place he had

filled in the hearts of his friends was perhaps only known when it was measured by his absence. Seldom has the death of any minister called forth more affecting expressions of genuine sorrow. Even the poor were not silent; their voices were heard mourning for one who had often visited and relieved and comforted them in their humble dwellings.

As Dr Robertson had been so long connected with St Andrews, had spent there so many happy years, and had at last died within its precincts, it was resolved that he should be interred in the burying ground of the ancient Cathedral, now a ruin, but once the most magnificent ecclesiastical building in Scotland. The funeral day was the 14th of January 1865, the last day of the second week of the new year. It was one of those sombre gloomy days so common in our climate, and there was something in the feelings of those who assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to the departed in harmony with the aspect of nature. Many had come from great distances to be present; all were drawn together by the same sense of a common loss, and experienced the influence of a common sorrow. The Professors of both Colleges in their robes, and the students in their gowns, joined the funeral procession, thus distinguishing and honouring the memory of one of the most gifted and able students of their ancient University. Along the streets leading to the place of interment the shops were closed, and many of the townspeople were to be seen among the mourners. Around the grave, at the

south-east corner of the burying-ground, to lower his honoured remains into their last resting-place, there met a group that suggested many touching memories; his father-in-law and other relatives by marriage were there, four of his elders from Glasgow and Mains, his old teacher, a fellow-student, and one distant blood relation, the only one he had; but he had gone to his heavenly Father's house, to join that great, loving, united family of whom our blessed Lord has said, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother." And so he was laid to his rest, not in the old burying-ground beside his own noble church, amidst the din and bustle of that great city where he had last held the ministerial office, but within the solemn shadows of what had once been a mightier and more renowned cathedral, with nothing now to disturb its stillness but the murmur of the ocean that rolls beneath. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Amen.

PART FIRST.

PART FIRST.

THE AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST.

(SEPTEMBER 24, 1848.)

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—2 Cor. v. 20.

IN the 18th and 19th verses of this chapter we have, within brief compass, a comprehensive delineation of the scheme of grace. In the 18th verse we read that “all things are of God;” that is, all things connected with the regeneration of mankind, about which the apostle had been speaking immediately before, have their origin in the Divine wisdom, power, and love. God is as much the source of the new, as of the old creation. The work is all His, and the glory is all His. Redemption in its design, its purchase, and its application must be traced up to His sovereign good pleasure and incomprehensible benignity.

Having asserted this, the apostle next proceeds a step further, and calls our attention to the grand his-

torical fact by which the Divine clemency was made manifest to our race. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." Here we have the essence, as in the other clause we have the origin of the gospel. "God was in Christ." What a wonderful truth! A man lived, and suffered, and was crucified. But God was in that man. That man was the Son of God, emptied of His glory, bearing the sins of the world, opening for transgressors a way of access into the holiest of all, and introducing into earth the word of reconciliation.

But the scheme was not completed even yet. Having by His infinite wisdom and self-moving goodness opened a way by which sinners might return to Him, the Almighty filled up His gracious plan by providing that His redeeming mercy should be made known to men of every country and of every age. For this purpose it was that He intrusted the word of reconciliation to the ministry of men, charging them to go abroad through all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. St Paul was one of these chosen instruments, and, as such, he calls himself an ambassador for Christ, and does the work of an ambassador by praying sinners to be reconciled to God. So likewise, it is because the Almighty has been pleased to institute a standing ministry in the Church, that I am privileged to speak to you this day. The text and the occasion equally demand that I should speak about the mutual

duties of minister and people. May the Holy Spirit make them clear to our consciences, showing us what our Divine Master would have us do in His vineyard, exhibiting to us our responsibilities, and enabling us to speak and hear, not as concerning matters in which we have no personal interest, but as concerning duties and responsibilities bearing on ourselves,—your duties and responsibilities, brethren, and my own.

In the first place, we claim to be ambassadors from Christ. Our Saviour Himself preached only for a short period of time, and to a small portion of the human race. But before He departed from the world, He made provision for the permanent maintenance of the Christian society on earth, for its nourishment, its discipline, and the regular and decent observance of its ordinances, by appointing apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. It is obvious from the whole tenor of Scripture, that this pastoral institution was designed to continue until human voices should have taken up and multiplied in the ears of all nations the song of the angels at Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” We find special duties imposed upon a ministerial class, a special character assigned to them, a special authority bestowed upon them, special and most weighty responsibilities ascribed to them, and, as their encourage-

ment and reward, special promises held out to them. It is true that our appointment comes not now directly from our Divine Master ; but though the office is conferred mediately, we must still regard it as an office based on the appointment of the Lord, and ultimately held from Him. We have not, indeed, the same powers which the apostles enjoyed ; but these were extraordinary ministers, endowed with extraordinary qualifications, for an extraordinary purpose. And while such superior gifts and prerogatives are now withdrawn, the essence of the sacred office remains what it ever was, the foundation of the pastoral authority continues unimpaired, for the essence of the sacred office is to feed the flock of God,—the foundation of the pastoral authority, the will of Christ our King.

We do not wish to magnify our office beyond what is meet. Far from us be those “great swelling words” whereby some men seek to exalt themselves as lawgivers, not ministers, in the Church. We have no new truths to tell, no hidden mysteries to unfold, no new commandments to impose, no mastery to assume over your consciences. We are not dictators, but only teachers in spiritual things ; not princes, but only ambassadors of a prince. Our glory is to serve ; to serve our Master and our brethren. We would wish to feel that our true dignity consists in our usefulness ; we would wish to humble ourselves that Christ may be exalted, deeming it our most blessed privilege if Christ would speak through

us to the souls of our brethren,—if Christ would go forth, through us, to save immortal spirits,—if Christ would use us as instruments to excavate one single stone from the heathenism that still lies hidden beneath the Christian profession of this land, to polish one single stone which may be built into the true Church here, and made a pillar at length in the temple of our God above.

Believing ourselves, therefore, to hold our commission as ambassadors from the great Head of the Church, it is our obvious duty, I would now remark in the second place, to take our instructions from Him. We are not left to our own discretion in regard to the doctrines we preach to you; still less are we left to our own invention. We possess the mind of Christ, not now indeed directly communicated to us as it was to the apostles of old, but embodied in written books, and thence to be learned by study and prayerfulness. So long as we speak according to the Bible, we speak with authority; whenever we leave the Bible our words deserve no religious regard. The pulpit is not a place for human speculations; the Church is not a school for human learning; the merit of the preacher is not the merit of a discoverer in science or in art; the highest end of the ministerial office is to save immortal souls; and the doctrines of salvation, being doctrines revealed from God, are to be learned from revelation.

We do not despise human learning, my friends. Far from it. There is need for human learning to

defend the faith against its enemies. There is no branch of knowledge which does not bring to the shrine of Christianity its tribute of confirmation, of illustration, or of enforcement. We despise nothing which can silence a doubt, or make a truth more plain; we despise nothing which can recommend a duty, or add emphasis to an appeal. But yet, whatever the accomplishments of mind may be which God has seen it good to give us, all must be used upon the truth as it is revealed. Here, then, are our instructions, here the material of our preaching. We ask your belief only in so far as we speak the words of this book. We hope for the aid of the Holy Spirit only in so far as we adhere to the mind of Christ made known to us through these Scriptures.

I was anxious to make these statements now, because, when I look abroad upon the Church, I see a growing tendency in many quarters to diverge from that strict adherence to the pure oracles, which is the distinguishing characteristic, and, I will say, the glory, of our Protestantism. Disguised infidelity is attacking us on the one side, exploded superstitions are reviving on the other. We must take care to preserve our intermediate place. If our Church is to continue pure, it is only by adhering to the pure Scriptures; if it is to raise again, as it did in the days of old, an effectual testimony against error, it can only be by upholding the Word of God, as the sole fountain of saving truth. I stand here, the pastor of a Protestant congregation, because I have

promised to recognise no Divine standard of doctrine and practice, save that which is now before me; and my earnest prayer to Almighty God is, that I may be strengthened to feed His flock with this bread of life,—not mocking them with dry husks of human speculation, but offering solid truths, truths which I must learn by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, by studying the Scripture,—I trust also by the Holy Spirit instructing me,—and which I feel to be the only food that can nourish souls for immortality.

Still further, as ambassadors for Christ, we are bound to preach Divine truth fully and fearlessly. There are many things in the Bible against which the soul of man rebels; many things so humbling, that pride cannot brook them; many things so adverse to the wishes of the carnal heart, that sinners would gladly dispense with hearing them. The soul loves peace; but there are statements here which will not let it be in peace. Christianity, the most tolerant of all religions to every weakness, is the most intolerant to every ruling sin. I do not suppose that any of you would tell me in so many words that you prefer the teaching of a falsehood, but in all congregations there are those whose hearts would not object to the concealment of the truth. But we dare not conceal it. Our responsibility is too weighty for that. Oh, brethren, your souls are too valuable for that. We have no more earnest prayer than that our words should be the echo of the Bible, taking up from time to time, and

reiterating the warnings of the Lord to all that live in sin, to all that reject Christ and His salvation. I read that if the Lord is saying to the wicked "thou shalt surely die," and the watchman fail to take up the sound, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood shall be required at the watchman's hand. Be this my apology if I shall sometimes speak to you regarding the terrors of the gospel; be this the ground for a prayer to God,—and oh! my brethren, join with me in that prayer,—that He would save me from that fear of man which bringeth a snare; for rather would I that one should address me in the spirit of Amaziah, "Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?" than that conscience should accuse me of deceiving souls, that the Master of the Church should lay upon me the blood of lost immortals.

Moreover, being ambassadors for Christ, and taking our instructions from the Word of God, we are called to present the doctrines of revealed truth as nearly as we can in the same light, and with the same degree of relative prominence with which they are presented in the Bible. It is no part of our task, indeed, to draw up a scale of doctrines and precepts, rated according to their comparative importance. Each in its own place is good and indispensable. The gospel resembles a grand and well-proportioned fabric, from which no stone could be taken away, no pinnacle removed, no carving obliterated, without impairing the effect of the whole. I do not mean, then, that we are to treat lightly anything which the Holy Ghost

has seen meet to comprehend in revelation; but that we are to place in the strongest light those things which the Bible has so placed, that we are to make characteristic features in our discourses of those things which are characteristic features in the Word of God. Such, for example, are the doctrines of human depravity, of justification by faith, and of the Spirit's influence; and such, in the moral system of the Bible, are the grand principles of love to God and love to our neighbour,—those principles which are not so much in themselves individual virtues, as the germinating grains from which all virtues proceed.

Above all, as ambassadors for Christ, we must have our Master's name continually on our lips. Christ must appear in all our discourses. His name must run through all our exhortations and warnings. It will not do to be mere rhetorical moralists. It will not do to content ourselves with discussions of the beauty of virtue, or arguments in proof of its utility. There have been heathen moralists, and infidel moralists; but Christian moralists are in a different position from both of these. Christianity comes to ameliorate the life of man, just by producing reconciliation with God; and while we hold that no preaching which has for its object the salvation of immortal souls can fail to be occupied with that name, by which alone man can be saved, we equally hold that no preaching can be effectual for the inculcation of present duty, save that which makes duty flow from love to Christ and love to God. In good truth, we throw aside the very

weapons which the Almighty has put into our hands whereby to contend with the works of the devil, unless we are much conversant with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; with Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Christ the way—Christ the life—Christ the atonement—Christ the sanctification. If we are addressing sinful men to warn them of their danger, what can give so much emphasis to our words as the cross of Christ? If we are addressing sinful men to bid them repent, what inducement so powerful as this same cross, revealing God's arms of mercy open to welcome back the prodigal? If we are addressing the children of the kingdom to bid them persevere in the Christian life, how can we do so better than by telling them of Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith? If Christians are to be pure, it is because their bodies are the temples of Christ. If there is to be domestic affection in the dwellings of Christians—here is the model, “as Christ loved the Church.” If all the virtues of the life and of the heart are to be cultivated by Christians, it is that they may adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour. Him, therefore, we preach, “Him first, Him last, Him midst and without end.” Him we preach to sinners as their Saviour,—to saints as their example and motive. Him this day, my brethren, would I preach to you, beseeching you in His stead to be reconciled to God.

But while these duties and responsibilities, along with many others which I have not time to particularise, are incumbent upon us as ambassadors for

Christ, suffer me to say that you also, brethren, have your duties and responsibilities. It is your duty, as well as ours, to be students of the Bible, for the Bible is the patrimony of all Christians. When the word of life is proclaimed in your ears, it is your duty to listen with candour, with reverence, with gratitude, and above all, with fervent prayer to God, that He would open your hearts to feel and understand the beauty and the power of the glorious gospel. We do not ask you to believe anything simply because it is stated from the pulpit; we ask you to be inquirers; it is your duty to be inquirers, daily, like the Bereans of old, searching the Scriptures whether these things be so. But while we warn you against a mere inert reception of the truth, against that unthinking faith which is scarcely entitled to the name of faith at all, we would warn you, on the other hand, against the indulgence of too critical a spirit. We do not wish to shift from ourselves any part of the burden we ought justly to bear; but, at the same time, we wish it to be remembered that we have higher ends than to amuse the fancy; that the truths about which we are called to speak are so serious, and so momentous, that they ought to be spoken by us with another feeling than the mere desire of gratifying any man, and heard by you with another feeling, a far deeper and more solemn feeling than can be called forth by human ministrations. Consider that your own souls are concerned in our doctrine, and while you may judge—for in this you

have liberty—with what degree of merit the duty of ambassador is discharged, for the sake of your immortal interests, forget not that the message is the message of the Lord.

Specially, my friends, remember that it is your duty to make self-application of the gospel. It will not do to regard Christianity as a system without you, whose end is answered when you have gazed at it with intelligence, when you have explored its parts with care, when you have seen their connexion, and admired their beauty. No doubt Christianity is a system without you, a noble, a divine system, whose magnificence will shine through all the weakness of its expounders; but Christianity is nothing to your salvation unless it be a life within you, unless you breathe it, and feel it, and act under its power. We fear there is too much importance usually attached to the ministers of Christianity, and too little to Christianity itself. Be warned against this, we implore you. Beyond the use of means we can do nothing. Not by the ministrations of the Church, not by any services of ours on Sabbaths or on week days, but by your own faith can you be raised to glory. Had I an angel's tongue, I could not utter a more blessed invitation than that which bids you come to God. But the responsibility of receiving it or rejecting it is your own; your own, even though your teacher should be unfaithful; for if I read that the watchman who is silent when the

Lord speaks must give account for the blood of souls, but that the watchman who faithfully takes up the cry shall be held clear at the day of reckoning, equally in both cases, whether the watchman has been at his post or not, the wicked shall die in his own iniquity.

Such, then, my brethren, are some of the duties incumbent upon the ambassadors of Christ. Such, also, are some of the duties incumbent upon you as receiving this embassy. When I look as if from without at the office of a Christian minister, I cannot but feel that he who fills it faithfully, occupies a sublime position. He is a man charged with the message of the Most High God, bearing the glad tidings of life and immortality, commissioned to lift up the standard of truth and goodness in the very forefront of the conflict between God and Belial. He is sent to be the servant of Christ, to speak in the name of Christ, to be a fellow-worker with the Lord of Hosts. But when I look at this same office from the position which I occupy to-day, I can as little help wondering at the counsel of Jehovah, who has thus committed His treasure to earthen vessels. I, a weak and unpractised instrument, have been called to labour in the vineyard of the Lord. You will not surely do me the injustice to suppose that I have undertaken the task without much anxiety. When I think of the well-approved labourers that have gone before me, when I look around me and

see so many among you more aged and experienced than myself, when I look above me, and reflect that God has placed me here, and given me my task, oh! brethren, I cannot but be affected by the great, the almost crushing weight I have agreed to take upon me. If I have any hope that the cause of the Redeemer will not take injury in my hands, it is in the promise of Christ Jesus, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." There is a sweet and precious saying in this book, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Oh, these words breathe upon the feeble like the light wind upon the smoking flax. That God who spoke them needs not strong instruments. I know He will not abandon His own cause. I know He has sometimes made choice of the weak things of this world to confound the strong. I know He has put the treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of Him. To Him, then, first and ever would I look, for without Him no one can do anything.

But, brethren, I would fain look to you also for much. I would look to you for your forbearance, for I feel that I shall need it often. I would look to you for your prayers; I feel that I shall need them always. It is a refreshing thing to think that one is remembered in the supplications of the faithful. It is a strengthening and enlivening thing to have friends at the footstool of a throne of grace. Pray,

then, for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; above all, that the Spirit of our Master may be poured out upon us, for the first requisite for profitable ministrations is that they be carried on in something of the Spirit of Christ. And I would look to you also for your co-operation. Godliness always flourishes best in a church whose members work together. Each pious individual ought to be a kind of radiating centre, whence influences for good diffuse themselves. One may be placed in a wider, another in a narrower sphere, but each in his own sphere ought to be a worker together with Christ. As the sun shining in the firmament sends not his rays straight down into many of our chambers, but only gives illumination by having his light broken and reflected from countless particles of matter, and dispersed in all directions, even so the Sun of righteousness enlightens many places by having His rays reflected into them from neighbouring Christians. Each father in his family, each master in his household, each friend among his friends, may be a preacher of Christ Jesus, and domestic affection may add a sweetness, or personal connexion an authority, or long-tried friendship a sacred influence to this private preaching, which public preaching cannot rival.

Let us endeavour, then, to be a praying and a co-operating people, and then, notwithstanding all the weaknesses which I cannot but feel, I see some pros-

pect that the work of the Lord will go on in the midst of us. And the going on of the work is the great matter to be considered by us all. A few years hence, and our voices shall be silent here as the voices of our fathers are; a few years hence, and the world shall have forgotten us; a few years hence,—I cannot help looking forward,—and unborn messengers shall proclaim the tidings of salvation to assemblies of yet unborn immortals, and all our paltry cares shall have been buried in oblivion, and our little heartburnings shall be at rest, and our jealousies hushed for ever. But the work of religion stretches into eternity. Ten thousand ages hence, and yōu and I shall still be receiving the fruits of our accepted or neglected Christianity.

Finally, brethren, I have no gift to enable me to look into the future and know the Divine purposes. I cannot tell how long the intercourse begun this day may be suffered to remain, nor can I anticipate its results. But a single word may be allowed to hope and prayer. I come among you in much fear and trembling for your sakes, lest you should suffer injury through me; for my own, lest I should meet the fate of an unprofitable servant; but I have no more ardent wish than that we may be helpful to one another on our joint road towards immortality. I have no more earnest prayer than that we may grow together in the Divine life. I know not how long, in His wisdom, the Almighty may spare me to labour in His Church; but while He spares me, I pray Him

to give me strength and spirituality. I can imagine no more lofty privilege than to minister at the Lord's table, no greater joy than to see some fruit produced ; and, when I cast a glance into far-distant ages, I can anticipate no dearer glory than that many of us should meet again and worship together in the Church above.

THE HIDDEN ONES OF GOD.

(MAY 19, 1850.)

“Thy hidden ones.”—PSALM lxxxiii. 3.

THIS single expression which I have chosen for the text may be regarded with propriety as furnishing a key to the whole psalm from which it is selected. According to the general opinion of the best scriptural scholars, the psalm was composed in the reign of Jehoshaphat, when the safety of the Jewish kingdom was threatened by an extensive conspiracy of the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and several other nations. It contains an earnest prayer to God for the overthrow of the enemies of His people, a prayer which is so conceived and expressed throughout, as to imply the most perfect confidence on the part of the Psalmist that his wishes would be granted. This confidence appears very conspicuously in the entire tone of the psalm, and the obvious ground of it lies in the firm persuasion of the writer, that, however dark the prospects of the Jews, however seemingly irresistible the coalition formed against them, they were still the “hidden ones” of Jehovah, to whom, in His good time, He would certainly give deliver-

ance. The very phrase, "they have consulted against thy hidden ones," while it shows with what a thoroughly organised opposition the Jews had to contend, and therefore points out the reason why the Psalmist prayed so earnestly, implies, on the other hand, that they possessed a sure defence in God, and thus explains how it was that so strong an element of hope came to be mingled in the supplication.

What concerns us, however, is not so much the confidence of the Jews in the time of their trouble, as the question whether or not we too, in these latter days, may stand in such a relation to the Almighty as that, in the time of our trouble, it may be possible for us also to enjoy the assurance of the Divine protection. Are there any persons now who may be truly called God's "hidden ones?" If so, who are they? What are their privileges? Do we belong to them?

With a view to that great end of the Christian ministry, which consists in the comforting of the saints, I shall endeavour to show you in the following discourse, that believers in Christ are God's "hidden ones," in the fullest and most encouraging sense of that beautiful expression; and may the Lord enable all His true people among us to see, to understand, and to be thankful for the hopes and benefits of their high calling.

In the first place, it may be observed that believers in Christ are the "hidden ones" of God, in virtue of the purpose of His will for their salvation. Doubtless the ground of the phraseology

employed in the text regarding the Jews is to be sought in the covenant God made with Abraham and Israel and Jacob; and surely, to say the least, the reason cannot be inferior on account of which we claim to apply the same language, in all the fulness of its meaning, to them who are joined to God through that eternal covenant, into which He entered on their behalf with His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. And with how many comforts is not this view replete! To think that all the wonderful machinery of redemption has been contrived and set in operation for the accomplishment of our salvation; to think that our names stand enrolled among the names of that multitude of whom Christ said, "My Father gave them Me, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand;" to think that we, poor and unworthy, were and are, and ever shall be, embraced in that Omnipotent love, of which we know that heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than the meanest of its objects shall be allowed to perish; how glorious, how strengthening, how animating a thought within the bosom of the very humblest of Christ's faithful people! Oh, if any of us are ever to rise to a confidence in God approaching that which the authors of the Bible have so often uttered, it must be through the reflection that, not because of our own works of righteousness, but because of the free purpose and grace of God, we have been assumed among His "hidden ones."

In the second place, believers in Christ are the

“hidden ones” of God, not only because God has chosen them to salvation, but also because they have themselves, by their faith, taken shelter with God. Faith is just the fleeing of the soul into that sure refuge, into which Christ has opened up the way. “God is my hiding-place,” says the Psalmist; “I am the way,” says Christ, and the two passages together express shortly the method and the nature of all Christian comforts. Through Christ, who is the way, we flee to God, who is “our refuge and our strength,” “our fortress and our high tower.” Faith is this flight of the soul into the stronghold of the Divinity. Exposed to dangers which we cannot by our own power avoid, surrounded by enemies whom we cannot by our own strength overcome, we get sight, as it were, of a strong city; we flee and are enclosed within the bulwarks of the promises. The everlasting Father is represented in the gospel as standing with open arms, ready to embrace and to protect His prodigal child. We, like the prodigal, feel the world’s cruelty, we come back Godwards, we see our heavenly Father waiting to be gracious, we hasten into His arms, and feel that we are once more happy. The Israelite, pursued by the avenger of blood, sped hastily to the place whither his foe was not allowed to follow him; he entered within the gate, and felt that he was safe. That is a parable of faith. Faith is that hastening of the soul to the refuges of God. Joab, pursued by the officers of Solomon, fled into the temple, and laid hold of the horns of the altar. That is a parable of

faith. Faith flees into the holy place, and grasps the altar sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and instantly enjoys the right of sanctuary. No enemy can follow thither. No destroyer can invade the sacred asylum of God's "hidden ones."

In the third place, believers in Christ are the "hidden ones" of God rightly so named, because it is frequently not apparent to casual observers, often not even to careful observers, that they have any peculiar portion in the Most High. On a memorable occasion in the life of Elijah, that prophet bitterly lamented before God, that the whole race of the righteous had perished out of Israel; the altars of God were thrown down, the covenant of God was forsaken; the servants of God were slain with the edge of the sword; no worshipping assemblies met for the praises of Jehovah, but unhallowed incense was offered everywhere to the idols of the nations. Nevertheless, even in this period of prevailing irreligion, when Elijah all but despaired for the Church of God,—God saw that there yet remained a seed to serve Him. "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, which have not bowed all the knees unto Baal." These were Jehovah's "hidden ones" in that degenerate age. One would fain believe that in all ages there has been a similar people, acknowledged by God as His own, and existing, unperceived by human eye, among those multitudes whom we are prone to regard as wholly given over to iniquity. We all know that for a very long period of time, the religious belief of

Christendom was so corrupted, and so unlike the truth as it is in Jesus, as scarcely to deserve the name of Christianity. We all know that, at this moment, a great part of mankind are held under bondage by the man of sin. We know that blind superstitions are prevalent under the false name of gospel truth. We know that doctrines which, in all charity, we cannot but describe as erroneous and demoralising, are taught in the name of the apostles. Yet fain would we believe, nay, we do believe, and hold most firmly, that in the midst of this apparently thick darkness, it will be found hereafter, that many have been living in the light of God's countenance; that from out of this apparently barren vineyard, some fruit will be collected into the heavenly garner; that in this apparent death of the gospel, some of its life has been preserved, and some of its best results accomplished. And among ourselves, too, we cannot doubt that there are those in the classes we deem outcast, whom God discerns to be His own.

But there is another line of remark on which I must not omit to enter under this head of discourse. Believers in Christ are not to any degree exempted from the common afflictions of this mortal life. They have no especial outward benefits of health or fortune conferred upon them which might mark them out as peculiarly blessed of God. Nay, it is a very possible thing that they may suffer trials above their neighbours, to such an extent even, that men might think them to be rather the peculiar objects of God's anger

than of His love. And in this view, as well as in that already suggested, they may be rightly named the "hidden ones" of God, being so named, still upon the same general ground, that their peculiar blessings escape the observation of the world. The case of Job affords an instance of the kind in question. Job was a good man, grievously afflicted. Three of his friends came to comfort him. When they saw the extent of his calamity they could not speak for a time. By and by, when they recovered themselves, they could not believe that so great an evil should be allowed to fall upon a person that was really pious; they began to think that Job's goodness had been mere hypocrisy, else he would never thus have suffered. Their words, therefore, instead of consolations became reproaches, and we find them all upbraiding the patriarch, who thus because of his affliction had become, in so far as they and other superficial observers were concerned, one of God's "hidden ones." Another case may be found in a yet more remarkable history,—the history of our blessed Lord. You remember—no Christian can forget—the closing scenes of His life. You know to what an accumulation of griefs and indignities He was then subjected. You remember the taunt of the chief-priests, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." Thus it was that the sufferings of Christ seemed to point Him out as a God-forsaken man; and even His very disciples would appear, in the darkness of the hour, to have

shared the gloomy suspicion. As regarded the love of God to Him, which, if the infinite can be conceived of as increased, was doubly intent at that moment, our Lord was then a "hidden one." And thus it may be even still. Nothing can be argued as to a man's spiritual state, from the simple circumstance that he is, or is not, an afflicted man. Outward distresses may be heavy on those very persons whom the Most High looks upon in Christ with a love that is unutterable; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. Upon the bed of languishing, into the hovel of the destitute, the eye of God may be looking down with a measureless intensity of love. Suspected by the world to be God-forsaken, they, whose afflictions are the sorest, may be known to the Omniscient as His "hidden" heritage.

This leads me to remark, in the fourth place, that believers in Christ have "hidden" comforts; most truly "hidden," since the world knows nothing of them; comforts which come through "hidden" channels, from a "hidden" source, and with a "hidden" blissfulness. The "hidden" channels are those sanctified affections which connect the Christian heart with the great fountain of grace which is in God,—affections which the heart of the worldly has not, but through which there flow down with constant motion into the inner being of the regenerate, reviving and refreshing streams from the river of life, which proceeds from beneath the throne.

The "hidden" sources are in that Saviour's love, who has promised to reveal Himself to His people in another way than He does unto the world; and in that Spirit's grace whom the world seeth not, neither knoweth, but of whom Christ said to His faithful servants, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you;" and in the vast compassion of that everlasting Father, who is seen by the Christian alone as a Father, by all else only as an offended King. And who can describe the "hidden" blissfulness of the children of God? It is so truly hidden that nothing but experience of it can teach us what its nature is. Speaking of the benefits enjoyed by the redeemed in paradise, St John tells us that they each obtain a new name, "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Equally unknown, save to its possessors, is the peace of the Christian even here. It is the secret of God.

Nothing is more a mystery to very many persons than the compatibility of peace and joy with seeming disquietude and sorrow. If there is one phrase in the Bible more than another at which they stumble, it is the phrase of the apostle, "rejoicing in tribulation;" rejoicing in the absence of all which they in their own experience have felt to be joyful, in the presence of all which they in their own experience have felt to be sad. There seems to them a contradiction in the very terms, a contradiction which they have nothing in their own consciousness to teach them how to reconcile. All their experience of misfortune has been

an experience of unmitigated painfulness, and how it should ever be otherwise they cannot conjecture. Yet that it is very often otherwise, their knowledge of facts will hardly let them doubt. They have seen specimens of patience in affliction. They have seen the destitute preserve contentment, and lead in poverty a life which they cannot but regard as happier than their own. They have heard of, they have witnessed, serene and hopeful deaths. My brethren, if I speak to any who have made such observations of what is taking place around them, if I speak to any who have seen in their neighbours or friends such a manifestation of inward resources, of which they are themselves ignorant, need I say how very weighty a lesson they have been receiving? They have learned the grand fact—a fact to them as yet inexplicable, but a fact which is among the most important human beings can know—that underneath all the troubles to which man is born heir, there lies a fountain of joy, which the heats of affliction cannot dry up, which has its springs in so deep a place, that it can never cease to flow. And what then remains for them—if they have any wisdom, if they have any regard for their own well-being, if they have any wish to experience those same comforts in the day which is most surely approaching when they too shall be afflicted, what remains for them—but to pray earnestly that, in their hearts, too, God would implant the truths and principles which they see to be in others as wells of water, springing up to everlasting life?

What a poor and destitute creature in God's world is the man who wants the "hidden" comforts! Those comforts which are not "hidden," those which the carnal mind sees and appreciates, the comforts of health and appetite, the comforts of society, the comforts of wealth, the comforts of reputation, how soon must all these be taken from us! And then, if we have no secret place whither we can repair for refreshing; if we have no flowing spring within ourselves whither we can go to drink; if, when health leaves us, and our appetites are palled, we have no "hidden" manna to subsist upon, which never loses its relish; if, when we are removed from the comforts of society, we have no "hidden" companionship with God; if, when the advantages of an earthly competence are taken from us, we have no "hidden" treasure laid up with the Most High; if, in that awful hour, which is surely drawing near to every one of us, when the fading world shall disappear from our sight, and all its pleasures grow pale and dim, we have no "hidden" glory on which to fix our eye—if, in that awful hour, we are left alone, alone and not with God,—language will not tell how utterly forlorn our hearts must be. But oh! how rich the man who has these "hidden" possessions. Men may esteem him poor, but he would not barter those things which he has, and men see not, for the whole treasures of a universe. He feeds upon the "hidden" food, and when his body is most weak, his soul is strongest; when the scorching heats oppress him, he drinks of the "hidden"

stream, and his heart is refreshed; when the benefits of earth are taken from him, the "hidden" benefits of heaven are vouchsafed in largest measure; and when all social joys are disappearing, and the things of time are growing dim, because of the shadow of death which is upon his eyelids, even then he feels himself drawing speedily near to the "hidden" company which is around the throne, the new song is beginning to be heard, and the things are brightening rapidly as he is rapidly approaching the unseen world.

But, further, in the fifth place, the believer in Christ has a "hidden" life. "Ye are dead," says the apostle, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." Not only does he enjoy comforts of which the world knows nothing, but he lives on principles of which the world is equally ignorant. His spiritual vitality is maintained by the sweet influences of the Holy Ghost, according to the declaration of our Lord, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He is a partaker of the life of Christ, according to that other saying, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Nothing connected with the Christian is more completely "hidden" from the world than the principles on which he lives, the manner in which his religious life is maintained. The Spirit works secretly; but though His work is done secretly, it is evidenced by visible and appreciable effects. How

the believer lives may be hidden, but that he does live cannot be concealed. We shall altogether mistake if we suppose that the "hidden" life is a life which is so "hidden," that no outward manifestations of it appear. It must be seen in life-like motions. That wonderful thing which we call our natural life, the life of our bodies, is a complete mystery. But yet it is not "hidden" in its results. Where it is, the limbs and the muscles move, the blood flows, the countenance is paled or flushed, expresses anger, kindness, hope, or fear, in wondrous sympathy with the mind that is within. And so where the spiritual life is, it must not, cannot be concealed, so that it might remain a "hidden" life for want of outward showing. We must let the world see that we live by the active motions of a true Christian conduct. But this life, though it cannot be "hidden" as to its effects, is and must be "hidden" as to its nature,—as to the sources whence it comes,—as to the nourishment by which it is maintained. It must have been obvious to every onlooker, that some strong principles were working in the apostles of the Lord, principles strong enough to induce them to follow Christ at the expense of all which man holds dearest. Their labours, their journeys, their privations, undergone of their own accord, testified to the existence of strong feelings and desires within them. But nothing was ever more unintelligible to the world than what these feelings and desires were. The world could not comprehend them; it beheld a mystery. And so it

must be always. That a life is in us must be seen ; what that life is cannot be explained.

In the sixth and last place, the believer in Christ is "hidden" with God for safe-keeping. We are permitted, and indeed instructed by the Scriptures, to contemplate the position of believers in this respect under various figures, all of which are unspeakably comforting. We are permitted, for example, to regard them as the peculiar treasure of God—His precious ones—gems destined for the Saviour's crown, now kept in secure custody, but at length to be brought out and bound into a glorious wreath on that day when the Lord "maketh up His jewels." We are permitted again to conceive of them as of travellers in a desert who were in danger of destruction from causes incident to the wilderness, but who have found secure refuge in Him who is a covert from the heat, and whose grace is pleasant, and capable of affording shelter, even as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. We are permitted once more to view believers as those who are actually dwelling in the city of the Lord. "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion," says the Psalmist ; "in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ; He shall set me up upon a rock." Anything more comforting than these various statements it is impossible to imagine. To have God for our fortress and deliverer in whom we trust,—what need we more ? We shall not pass through this existence without meeting with many enemies, without being assaulted

by many temptations, but "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation."

And now, my friends, permit a single word in conclusion. Are we among God's "hidden ones?" This is not a question that is quite unanswerable, for if we are His people, it cannot be altogether "hidden" from ourselves. Are we enjoying the "hidden" comforts? Do we feel within our breasts the throbbings of the "hidden" life? The matter is too momentous to be slightly dealt with. We cannot tell how very near us the time may be when no comforts shall be within our grasp, save only the "hidden" comforts of the children. We cannot tell how soon the period may arrive when, feeling at length that the commandment has gone forth which calls us out of this present scene, we shall wish above all things that we were in the safe-keeping of God. But now is the way open; now is the everlasting

God inviting us; now let us hasten into His arms. Oh, to live in this world as the kept of God!—be this—be this our portion. To feel that when those troubles which no child of Adam may hope to avoid entirely are pressing upon us, we can flee into a Saviour's bosom and be happy there; to be surrounded by the everlasting arms; to be hidden in the secret place of the Almighty from all that is truly evil;—be this our privilege, and we are satisfied. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or peril, or sword? Nay; for in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us; we have conquered when we have taken shelter with God; by our flight into the sanctuary we have overcome.

THE LAND OF THE STRANGER.

(JUNE 30, 1850.)

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”—
PSALM cxxxvii. 3.

I NEED hardly say that this psalm is not one of the compositions of King David. It bears the obvious marks of a much later date; for, as you are well aware, the sweet singer of Israel had gone to strike his harp in heaven several hundreds of years before his sinful countrymen sat weeping beside the rivers of Babylon. The psalm is plainly a reminiscence of the captivity, composed by some unknown author, probably about the time of the return, and vividly descriptive of Jewish feeling during the unhappy period when “Zion was a wilderness, and Jerusalem a desolation.”

The use I am about to make of the verse I have chosen for the text requires me to premise a few observations on its connexion with the preceding part of the psalm. In the third verse, we find the Jews thus speaking:—“There,” that is in Babylon, “they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” Now, it

seems to be often thought that this request was made in mockery, as if the Babylonians had desired to add insult to oppression, and to wound their captives in the tenderest point, by deriding their religion.

But there is no ground for supposing that the condition of the Jews in Babylon was one of slavery, as the condition of their fathers had been in Egypt. On the contrary, it seems probable that, in so far, at least, as temporal things were concerned, it was not greatly, if at all, inferior to their condition in Judea. We know that it was a frequent practice of the ancients to carry vanquished tribes into some unoccupied part of their own empire, where they had a residence assigned to them, in which they were permitted to acquire property, and where they enjoyed the protection of the laws. In the 18th chapter of 2d Kings, we find Sennacherib assuring the Jews that he had no design to oppress or enslave them, but simply to transfer them to "a land like their own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and honey." His purpose was apparently to make use of them to colonise some thinly-peopled part of his dominions; and such, in all likelihood, had been the precise design that his predecessor, Shalmaneser, had carried into execution with regard to the ten tribes of Israel. If you reflect further that a very short period only elapsed from the beginning of the captivity before Daniel was taken into the favour of Nebuchadnezzar, and promoted to a chief rank in the government, and that he continued to

possess this rank almost till the time of the return, you will see additional reason to believe that the usual policy of the Babylonians would hardly be departed from, when such a devout and patriotic Hebrew had so influential a voice in the counsels of state. Nor will you think that the name of Jehovah would be rashly insulted in the face of the decree that was promulgated after the deliverance of the three children, that whosoever should speak anything against their God would be "cut in pieces."

From all this we seem at liberty to adopt the view that the Psalmist does not mean to represent the Babylonians as actuated by a spirit of mockery in making the request mentioned in the third verse of the psalm, but rather by a spirit of kindness. They had observed their captives to be unhappy in their new abode, and they wished to reconcile them to their lot. 'Sing,' said they, 'the songs of Zion; do not sit weeping thus, nor hang your harps upon the willow; for this is a fair and pleasant land; establish your worship here, here celebrate your feasts unto the Lord your God, awake Chaldean echoes to the melodies of Zion.' But this kindness was still the kindness of the spoiler. Nothing could replace Jerusalem to the heart of the Jew. Any attempt to reconcile him to another home was like a temptation to the true child of Abraham to forget his God. His heart yearned for the covenant land. Away from the city which the Lord had chosen out of the whole earth to place His name there, he was as it were exiled from Jehovah.

‘How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? How can our lyres sound mirth when Zion’s gates are desolate, and the cry of Jerusalem has gone up? We cannot sing the song wherewith our fathers praised, save in our fathers’ land, and near the sacred habitation of our fathers’ God. Babylon is fair, and her glory great, and majestic the flowing of her mighty rivers; but sweeter to us is the gurgling of the smallest brook of Judah, dearer the very dust of Zion!’

And now, my brethren, let us see in these things a parallel to our own circumstances. I do not adduce the text in proof of any doctrine; it contains none, and therefore can prove none; but considering how often the history of the Jews is used in Scripture as a type of Christian life, and how often our condition on earth is described as that of strangers in a strange land, it may be allowed us to make an application of the text to our own spiritual state.

We, too, have a land of promise—a covenant land: where Christ is, there is the Christian’s home. This world is only the place of our sojourning, through which we are passing swiftly, in company with a multitude of pilgrims, many of whom sympathise so little with our Christian joys and sorrows, that, if our piety have any depth or earnestness, we shall often feel that we are indeed in the land of the stranger. Sinful pleasures and carnal affections will constantly tempt us to forget our true position, to reconcile ourselves to earth, and cease from pressing onwards for

the prize of our high calling. We shall need, like the Jews in Babylon, to remember that this is the kindness of the spoiler; and, while we carefully preserve the thought that our citizenship is above, we shall feel a deep anxiety to know if our condition on earth must be altogether one of exile, if our feeling must be altogether that of the exiled Hebrew, or if it be not possible to sing the Lord's song on earth with some foretaste of those emotions with which we shall sing it in heaven, when we join the choir of the angels of God, and the glorified hosts of the redeemed.

It requires true and elevated Christian feeling to understand and appreciate the reason why the believer regards himself as a stranger here. I say the reason, and not the reasons, because though there are many things which, with God's blessing, will preserve and deepen the sense of strangeness in the Christian heart, there is one thing chiefly on which it depends. It would be easy to speak of the trials and sorrows, the shortness and uncertainty of life as the grounds of this sentiment; but there is nothing peculiarly Christian in the simple knowledge that here we have no continuing city, though there is much in that knowledge to lead to Christianity. If we have no other reason for regarding ourselves as strangers here than simply because we are subject to physical and temporal distresses; if we desire another habitation only because it will be free from these; if, when we call ourselves strangers before the Lord, we are merely acknowledging the necessity which presses upon us, as it has pressed

on all our fathers, that we shall soon go hence and be no more remembered; if we are meaning no deeper thing than simply that we are dying creatures;—what do we more than others, do not even the publicans the same? The most wicked of men is as certain as the best believer can be that he will remain connected with earth only for a short period. We must look, then, to something else as the ground of that which is peculiarly Christian in the sentiment, and that something we undoubtedly find in the phrase of the apostle, “Present in the body, but absent from the Lord.” They who have known God, and loved God, and have experienced the unspeakable joy of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, feel themselves strangers in this world just in proportion as they do not realise God’s presence with them always. They must have known His presence to be light and joy, before they can lament His absence as darkness and sorrow; they must have rejoiced in the vision of His countenance before they can deplore the hiding of His face; nor is it possible that they should weep in desolation as strangers and exiles, unless they have experienced that the dwelling with God in faith is the true home-life of a human heart.

The true spiritual and Christian reason, therefore, for regarding ourselves as strangers in the world is, that we so often fail to see God revealed to us by the vision of faith. In seasons of clear discernment we derive great joy and peace from the view of His

gracious countenance beaming upon us with all a Father's tenderness; but anon we fall into new sins, obscuring clouds rise between our souls and God, faith relapses into weakness and dimness, and the glories we remember deepen by contrast the present gloom. Then is the believer visited by a sense of loneliness most sad and painful, when from any backsliding or weakness of faith God is hidden from his view.

And often, too, will the same emotion be produced by causes without, as well as by causes within the man. Not only from the weakness of a faith which cannot for a time see God, but from the iniquity of a surrounding world in which God can hardly be seen, will the sense of strangeness proceed. Nothing, we can believe, would give the Jew in Babylon a more vivid sense of exile than the daily sight of the false worship of the Chaldeans, when, instead of the solemn assemblies in which he used to mingle at Jerusalem, adoring with silent reverence the invisible Jehovah, he witnessed the tumultuous concourses and cruel rites of those who fell prostrate before idols of silver and of gold; and so there is nothing which begets in the Christian mind a more vivid sense of strangeness, than to pass out from the solemn service of the Most High God, and to see Him so little acknowledged in the habitual lives of men, to find so many who are still worshippers of Mammon or of Belial. Oh, if we never feel that such a world is to us a strange place, may it not be feared that it

is only because we ourselves are so little accustomed to the language and to the services of heaven?

But an endeavour was made by the Babylonians to reconcile the Jews to their banishment, by offering them the pleasures of Chaldea, and by telling them, that though at a distance from Jerusalem, they might still worship the God of their fathers.

So worldliness will now hold out to us flattering promises of ease and comfort, and will tell us, too, that it does not prohibit us from serving God. And far easier would our vocation be, if only we could content ourselves with the place in which we are, for the consciousness of the carnal heart finds utterance in less laborious deeds than does the consciousness of the spiritual. Had the Jews consulted their love of ease, they would speedily have reconciled themselves to Babylon. There they had peace and plenty; there they were dwelling in the richest portion of the earth, for the sun shines with a more genial heat upon no fairer or more fertile fields than those of Chaldea—the mother of nations. And what would they find if they returned to Palestine? Desolation everywhere; the walls of Jerusalem black unto the ground; the house of the sanctuary in ruins. But they had another counsellor than ease; patriotism and piety urged them on, and they would grudge no effort if so be that the city of the Lord might rise from its ashes. My brethren, neither must we take counsel of our indolence. If we can ignore the fact that our nature is in ruins, or if we can sit contentedly amid the deso-

lation, all may be easy for us ; but since the question is about the building of the Lord's house—about the restoration of the holiest within us—about the building together of all our faculties and powers for an habitation of God through the Spirit, surely we must not inquire whether it is easier, but whether it is nobler, wiser, and worthier, to permit this desecration, or to be up and doing, that, with God's help, the inner sanctuary of our own souls may become again the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost.

Our text may further suggest a consideration which we shall do well to bear in mind, when tempted by the blandishments of sin to forget our position as strangers here.

However kind and caressing the words of the conqueror, never could the true Hebrew forget that the lips which spoke them were the same lips which shouted for joy in the day of Jerusalem's desolation. He must have forgotten what was stamped in his memory as with the brand of an iron, before he could listen to the flattering voice ; he must have forgotten the savage outcries of the cruel soldiery ; the flames of the burning palaces of Zion, and the piteous wailing of widows and of orphans. And have not we to forget that theirs is the kindness of the spoiler, before we can listen to the flatteries of our sins ? When we read in the Bible that God at the beginning pronounced this world very good, and when we look abroad upon it now, and see what miseries are prevailing in it, what moral disorder there is in

it, what confusion, what discord; when we think how many of its inhabitants have suffered and are suffering from evils of a thousand forms, and of every degree of painfulness; when we look into ourselves and perceive how our immortal souls are fettered by a grievous bondage, how the light of reason and conscience is dimmed within us, how the image of God in which we were formed is marred and made faint, how fears and doubts are begotten in us, and hopes and aspirations quenched; can we think otherwise than that it is utter madness to hearken to the promises of that spoiler who has brought into the world that was named good, these manifold evils under which all creation groaneth and travaileth, as we now see, and hear, and feel it? Verily, if we are deaf to such living, ever-sounding voices, we should not be warned though one were to rise from the dead.

I must now hasten to the last topic on which I mean briefly to remark. It may well be an anxious question with us whether our condition and feelings as Christians must be quite identical with those of the Jew in Babylon; must it be impossible for us to sing the Lord's song on earth? Shall we then only, and for the first time, praise Him when we are exalted to our everlasting home? Are all the blessings we now enjoy to be suspected and refused, as proceeding from the false kindness of the spoiler? Are there none which may be thankfully received as the earnest of better blessings yet to come?

To convince ourselves that the world is not neces-

sarily a place of utter exile, we have only to remember the promise of our blessed Lord to His disciples—a promise which may be fulfilled to us also—“Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.” “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.” As, then, we have seen that the peculiar ground of the Christian’s feeling of strangeness in a strange land is, that he fails at times to realise the nearness of God; so now it is manifest that the peculiar ground of that joy and peace which it is possible for him to attain on earth, lies in the felt and continual indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

One thing is clear: we are not, in our common intercourse with society, far from the place in which God can be rightly worshipped, and in which He has promised to reveal Himself to the eye of our minds. At a distance from the mountain of the Lord’s house, the Jew felt himself banished from God’s presence, inasmuch as God then dwelt with man in and by that symbolical glory which filled the Holy of Holies; but the day has come, and now is, when this local manifestation of God has ceased, when he who worships anywhere in spirit and in truth, is accounted a true worshipper, and when God reveals Himself, not outwardly by a symbol, but inwardly in the realities of Christian light and love, to every heart in every place that abides with Him. At a distance, too, from the courts of the temple, and the various altars of sacrifice, the Jew in Babylon could not comply

with the requirements of the law; and hence, to the evils of simple exile, there was added the fear lest, being unable to fulfil the Levitical law, he might be altogether cast out from the favour of the Most High. Now, here again our condition is widely different. When we mingle in society, and take our part in the common business of life, we are not away from, but truly in the very midst of the place where we are required to offer sacrifice. For what is the sacrifice demanded of us? Not a sacrifice of propitiation to make atonement, but a sacrifice of thanksgiving, which consists in the dedication of our bodies and our spirits to the service of God. In virtue of the one offering for sin made by our great High Priest, we are to present to God our daily and acceptable sacrifice—the sacrifice of ourselves.

However it may be unhappily true, that our common every-day employments are often quite divested of a religious character, they are not so by any necessity of things. The grand design of Christianity as a religion for this world is to spiritualise the secular, to refine the earthly into the likeness of the heavenly, to bring us near God in respect of our whole being. It is not only when engaged in religious ordinances that we serve God, but it is rather then that we learn how to serve, and receive those motives which, through grace, dispose and persuade us to serve. Prayer by itself is not so much service as seeking strength to serve; reading the Word is not so much service as learning how to serve; the

partaking of sacraments is not so much service as the reception into the mind of nourishment to enable us to serve. But life in godliness and charity is service in the highest sense; the ordinances of religion are only the means to this end. In so far, then, as through the help of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to realise the character of Enoch, and daily to walk with God, to that degree is it possible for us to sing the Lord's song on earth. Christianity is not itself a melancholy thing; but the measure of the Christian's sadness is just the measure of the imperfection of his Christianity. To the degree to which his faith is weak, and his piety defective, to that degree precisely will he find himself to come short of joy and peace in believing. And so, on the other hand, to the degree to which his faith is strong, and his piety habitual, to the same degree will he feel it possible, even in this world, to rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of his salvation.

Nor will the Christian need any more to suspect and refuse the secular comforts and enjoyments of his lot, as being the fruits of a false kindness which would beguile him to his ruin. If religion, rightly understood, is not a thing which stands aside from the great proportion of our actions and time, but mingles with all we do, and sanctifies every moment; so neither is it a gloomy and morose principle, forbidding the innocent pleasures which God has put within our reach, but rather a principle of moderation and true refinement, enabling us to exercise that

mastery over our desires, which becomes rational beings, and divesting life, not of its enjoyments, in so far as these are pure and true, but of its coarseness, and rudeness, and earthliness. The sin is not in the things around us, but in the relation in which we stand to them. If we stand to the world in the relation of its slaves, serving our own appetites, and obeying no higher behests than those of sense and passion, then do we sin, and shamefully degrade ourselves. But if we stand to the world as the children of God, feeling that we are placed in it for the discharge of certain duties, using with sobriety and gratitude the gifts with which God has enriched our lot, ruling our desires, and having all our actions refulgent with devotion, then do we realise the spirit of the gospel. For this is the vocation of the gospel—to sanctify whatever it touches; to give over no part of the life of man to evil; to impart an air and look of heaven to things of earth; to assume the blessings of time into a grand whole, to which the blessings of eternity belong also; to lift up the entire man into a higher and purer region; and, by a constant revelation of God in Christ to the believer's heart, ever more and more to divest this world of the aspect of a strange land, until at length he shall feel himself to be for ever at home with God in that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

To some it may appear that the latter part of this discourse is a contradiction of the former. It was

said that to a man who has true delight in communion with God, this world must often wear the appearance of a strange land, and it has now been said that, considering the promise of Christ to be with His people always—considering the outpouring of the Holy Ghost—and considering that while occupied in the common business of life we are precisely in the right sphere for the active service of our God,—it is not quite a necessary thing that while present in the body we should be altogether absent from the Lord. Are not these things, then, contradictory? So far otherwise, that they teach us, I think, one of the most important lessons we can learn. I have attempted to show that, to a great extent, the measure of that aspect of strangeness which the world presents, is the measure of the believer's own shortcomings. If it be the fact that often we cannot delight ourselves in God, the cause is just that, by our own sin, we live too often far from God. This, then, is the exceedingly important practical conclusion to which we are led,—that in order to delight more in God, we must live nearer to Him. Weakness of faith, remnants of sin, and backslidings from God, are the real causes of our Christian disquietude. To remedy the evil we must pray and labour that the cause may be removed, that faith may be increased, sin destroyed, and our progress in sanctification made steadier. To have more of the joys of the world to come, we must live more under its power. To have sweeter foretastes of celestial bliss, we must maintain more of a celes-

tial character. "Walk thou with God, and be at peace," is the true answer to the question of the heart, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in this strange land?"—The heart of the mourner asks it in those seasons of darkness, when all the joys of life seem obscured for evermore; "wait on the Lord, and thou shalt yet praise Him, who is the health of thy countenance and thy God."—The heart of the suffering asks it when this frail flesh is racked with pain; look to the cross of Christ, and learn the song of patience, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."—The heart of every Christian asks it often: live much in prayer, hold frequent communings with God, use those channels through which Christ reveals Himself to His people, and then, even in the course of thy mortal journey, thou shalt join with gladness in the song of thanksgiving to Him who maketh thee lie down among the green pastures, who leadeth thee beside the still waters, and restoreth thy soul.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

(JULY 1852.)

“ And behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. . . . While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.”—
MARK V. 22-24, 35-43.

THE miracles of our blessed Lord may be regarded as a kind of parables in action; or, in other words, not merely as proofs that the revelation He came to communicate was really of God, but as themselves

integral portions of that revelation ;—signs as well as wonders ; signs that were significant of Christian doctrines ; and illustrations also of Christian dispositions and duties.

St Matthew in his Gospel relates the miracle of the raising of Jairus' daughter immediately after he has told us of a great feast in his house, at which our Lord had been present. From the house of feasting, he conducts us to the house of mourning. But different though the two scenes were,—the guest-chamber in the house of Matthew, and the death-chamber in the house of Jairus,—the presence of Christ was equally appropriate in both ; just as still the presence of religion is equally adapted to temper and sweeten our enjoyments, and to moderate and mitigate our griefs. Religion is not the enemy of any of the real pleasures of life. It not only does not prohibit innocent gratifications, but it rather adds relish to them all, by showing us in them the smile of God ; while by restraining from excess, it prevents them from palling at the time, or turning to wormwood afterwards. And when our sorrows come, what is there to support us under them that can be compared with the devout recognition of our Father's hand, and the thankful remembrance that whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth ?

But not only was the presence of the Lord equally appropriate in both the scenes, but it was the same spirit which led Him to partake in, and help forward the joy of the one, and to share in, and dispel the

gloom of the other. There are some who find it difficult to understand how those whose duty it is to carry consolation to the bedside of the dying, and whisper kindly comfort to them that are distressed, should ever consistently take part in scenes of enjoyment, and even of hilarity. But the least reflection will show, that to enter with sincere fellow-feeling into the sorrows of the mourner, and to rejoice with true cordiality in the joys of the glad, may be both manifestations of the same brotherliness of mind. In proportion as the heart is thoroughly cleansed from uncharitableness and selfishness, and conformed to the character of our sympathising Redeemer, it will be gladdened by the joys, and saddened by the sorrows of men around—gladdened with a gladness that is free from envy, and saddened with a sadness that is unalloyed by affectation.

There came, then, to our Lord, shortly after His return from the country of the Gadarenes, a certain ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum, by name Jairus. This man had a daughter—"one only daughter," as we learn from St Luke—of the age of twelve years. The providence of God had preserved her to her parents in safety throughout that perilous season of childhood, during which so many of our species are cut off. She had reached a most interesting period of human life—that beautiful period which resembles spring in the natural world, when the delicate leaves of the trees are not as yet embrowned by the dust of summer, and by its burning heat, and when the ex-

panding blossoms at once call forth the anxiety of the husbandman, and give promise to him of good and plenteous fruit. But it seemed now that death had laid his hand upon the sweet flower, for death spares neither youth nor beauty, nor respects the hopes of men. We are not informed what disease it was which was hurrying the maiden to an early grave. It may have been that fell consumption, which delights to prey upon the fairest of our race, and, as in awful mockery, arrays its victims with a pallid loveliness. It may have been some one or other of those more violent disorders which rack the frame with agony, till friends are almost glad when the sufferer goes to rest. But we cannot tell. And it does not matter. Death was there, and Jairus saw it and came to the Lord.

There is an apparent discrepancy between the narrative of St Mark and that of St Matthew. St Mark tells us—and St Luke agrees with him—that Jairus came, saying that his daughter “lay at the point of death.” St Matthew informs us that he came, saying, “My daughter is even now dead.” It is not difficult, however, to reconcile these varying accounts. You will observe, if you read the narrative of St Matthew, that he relates what happened much more concisely than the other evangelists. He does not mention at all the message that came from Jairus' house. He brings forward merely the chief feature of interest in the transaction; and as this lay in the raising of the damsel from the dead, he finds it unnecessary to make any allusion to her previous ill-

ness. This is one way in which the two accounts may be harmonised; but there is also another way. It is quite possible that they may both give us accurately what Jairus said. "He had left his daughter at the last extremity; he knew not whether she was now alive or dead. When he came away from his house her life was ebbing so fast that she could scarcely be living now. And yet, having no certain notice of her death, he may well have been perplexed whether to speak of her as departed or not, and thus he may have expressed himself at one moment in the one language, and next moment in the other." Whichever explanation you adopt—and either of them is quite sufficient—you have here just what you will find in many other places of the Gospels, that substantial agreement and circumstantial difference which show the four Evangelists to be independent witnesses, each recording what he knew without communication or collusion.

Moved by that unfailing kindness which always distinguished Him, our Lord agrees at once to go with Jairus. While they are on the way a hindrance takes place. A woman comes, and is healed of her disease—Jesus delays for a little to converse with her. The whole time occupied by the events recorded in the verses, from the 25th to the 34th, may have been very short; but it would seem long to Jairus. He is profoundly anxious, and to anxious minds short times seem long. "Death is shaking the last sands in the hour-glass of his daughter's

life." A moment's delay is to him most painful. Nevertheless, the tarrying of the Lord is not without its use to him. It both exercises him in patience, and supplies him with a ground for faith. For, even during the short interval, the Lord performs a miracle in his presence, which gives him new reason to trust in the power and goodness by which he hoped his own calamity would be removed.

But his growing trust receives a terrible blow. While the Lord is still conversing with the woman, tidings arrive. "There came from the ruler's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" The great change had taken place. She had entered that unknown world, from within whose mysterious portals no human tears nor human prayers can bring back a friend. What an awful event is death! How strange and solemn the alteration it produces! There may be little outward difference to distinguish the last moment of sinking life, from the first moment after the soul has departed. Yet what a real, what a mighty change! Last moment there was a living spirit there, this moment there is nothing but unprofitable clay; more beautiful, perhaps, than it was before, beautiful in its marble paleness and statue-like repose, but beautiful with a beauty no longer of this world, a sad and touching beauty that moves to tears. Men feel that they are in a presence in which it behoves them to tread softly, and speak in whispers. So long as the blood flows, however languidly,

and the pulse beats, however faintly, and the breath is drawn, however painfully, our affections still cling to the sufferer before us, and we entertain the fond hope that, perhaps even yet, he may be given back to the works of men and to our love. But when the heart has ceased to beat, and the last long sigh has been drawn, the parent is childless, the child is an orphan, the wife is a widow, and the heart that but an instant ago had a friend to love, and was full of earnest longings and prayers, is now empty and desolate. All hope is over.

Nay, not so, brethren. Let us thank God for the sequel of the history at present before us. Let us bless and praise His holy name, who hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Let us give Him glory for that we may kindle at the altar of religion a hope that cannot be extinguished even by the choke-damp of the grave. Blessed be God, though death is mighty, he is not the mightiest! All his power shall be broken, and his victims shall yet be his conquerors, for the Lord hath risen, and there cometh a time, whereof every first day of the week hath sure, though silent promise, when they who sleep in the dust shall awake to immortality.

As our Saviour approached the house of Jairus there fell upon His ear the sound of that noisy lamentation with which the Jews were wont to bewail their dead. St Matthew informs us, "There were minstrels and people making a noise." It was the

custom of the Israelites and other ancient nations to employ hired mourners to lament for the departed, and these were the parties who filled the house when Jesus came, and whom He dismissed before performing His miracle, as unfit to be profitable witnesses of that event.

One can hardly help remarking here, that wherever Christianity has prevailed, and proper sentiments regarding the nature of dissolution have been produced through its agency, it has done, more or less, what its Founder did on this occasion, by abolishing those turbulent and ostentatious demonstrations of unreal grief, which have been common in different ages and countries. He who looks on death in a Christian spirit with that sense of its awfully momentous consequences, which the Christian revelation is fitted to inspire, and with those serious emotions which arise from the reflection that it will soon be his own lot, must feel that the occasion is extremely unsuitable for the pomp of vain display, and the mockery of purchased sorrow. Rather let the curtained window, and the silent house, and the light cautious footfall, and the voice reduced to a solemn undertone, betoken that one is near before whom mortals quail. When the shafts of the destroyer have been falling at our side, it is not the time to gratify our pride by an empty grandeur; but we shall act in a way that accords far better with the presence of Him in whose hand the rich and the poor are alike, if we commune in silence with our own souls and with God, praying to be

made humble, and seeking in the near view of judgment and eternity, to learn, as we may there learn best, the worthlessness of earthly things. That is only a natural sentiment which leads us to desire that the last offices of friendship should be decently performed; but if anything is ever out of place, it is ostentation beside the grave. Nor is the purchased lamentation of venal mourners any worthy tribute to departed excellence. Give us so to live that we shall sometimes be remembered by those, be they ever so humble, to whom we have been useful in our day; give us that our graves shall be watered by some tears from the eye of genuine friendship; give us that our names shall be enshrined, though but in one heart, that we have cheered, or consoled, or instructed, or led to good; for this is a better and more precious thing than the pomp of lordly obsequies, or the splendour of a stately monument.

But now our Lord had entered the house, and the first words He spoke sounded strangely. "When he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead but sleepeth." Some who are anxious to explain away all the miraculous parts of the Gospels, are of opinion that He meant by this to say, that she was only in a swoon, and that, in fact, her soul had not left her body. It is impossible, however, to reconcile this with the narrative, with the words which St Matthew puts into the mouth of Jairus, with the message that came to him, or with the fact that, when our Lord

spoke of sleep, the bystanders laughed Him to scorn. Just as He said upon another occasion, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," so, and with some allusion perhaps to the speedy awakening that was about to take place, in speaking of sleep, He was only using a gentle name for death. And death is indeed a sleep, silent and still. Many are the proprieties that can be discerned in this image. The folding of the hands, and the closing of the eyes, and the resting in pleasant unconsciousness from the labours of the day, afford a natural analogy to the repose and quiet of the tomb. And as in the watches of the night, when the body is at rest, the mind wanders far and wide in the strange unearthly land of dreams, among things unthought of in its waking hours, and sights such as the eye of flesh never looked upon; so when men call death a sleep, they seem to utter their belief in immortality; and to express that conviction, which humanity can never, even by the most earnest effort, cast entirely aside, that we do not all die, but that the soul still lives and gains acquaintance in its disembodied state, with things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which, till death unlocks the mysteries of another world, it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. And there may be implied, too, in this same pregnant image, the blessed hope of a coming resurrection; for as the morning dissolves the spell of slumber, and we arise to the business and pleasures of a new day, so when we speak of death as sleep, we seem to anticipate that

coming morn, which shall set free all generations from their long repose, and introduce the children of God to the whole glory of their promised inheritance. How beautiful, how full of consolation in its very sound, is that phrase we have learned from the Scriptures—'to fall asleep in Jesus'! Yes, ye well-beloved; ye who were with us once, but whom we see not now; ye whose footsteps sound not now upon our thresholds, but whose memory is in our deepest heart, never thence to be effaced; ye are not lost to us for evermore, ye are not dead, ye only sleep, to wake and live again.

Having dismissed the hired mourners, our Lord proceeded to the room where the body lay, taking with Him only Peter, and James, and John, and the father and mother of the maid. The house was now solitary and still, as beseems the house of death. "Two souls," as it has been said beautifully, "two souls, sorrowing yet hoping, stand, like funeral tapers, beside the couch of the dead maiden,—the father and the mother;—while the Church, for whose comfort until the end of the world a great wonder was to be done, was represented by the three most trusted of the disciples." And now the awakening takes place. The Lord advances and takes the damsel by the hand, and says to her (St Mark gives us the very words in the Aramaic dialect in which they were spoken,) "Talitha cumi"—Damsel, arise. What majesty in the narrative! What majesty in the deed! None of those efforts, none of those pros-

trations such as we read of in the Old Testament when Elijah and Elisha raised the dead. Talitha cumi—Damsel, arise; “and she arose straightway.”

There is a peculiar interest which attaches to this miracle, and in like manner to the raising of Lazarus and that of the widow's son at Nain, altogether distinct from and superior to the mere greatness of the event. No human voice can recall the spirit from the state of the dead to reanimate the frame from which it has once departed, so that at Capernaum, at Nain, and at Bethany, we recognise the presence of the great power of God. But the grand point of interest lies not so much in the wonderful nature of these miracles as in the relation in which they stand to doctrine. A great work it was to raise the dead; but when we remember that He who performed it declared that He had come to destroy death, and that He preached a general resurrection to be effected by His power in due time, then the few instances in which He actually showed that power, become so many encouragements to believe the promise, and to expect the day when all who are in their graves shall hear His voice, and come forth to live for ever. Not only does religion in general derive part of its evidence from these miracles, but this peculiar and most consolatory doctrine which teaches that the soul and body of man shall be reunited, finds in them a special and convincing attestation. In them we have not only evidences of religion, but actual trophies of the defeat of the last enemy, and certain pledges of the

coming resurrection. It was as if the great High Priest had been presenting to God the wave sheaf of the first fruits, in earnest of that great harvest which shall be gathered at the end of the world. It was as if some liberated captives appeared in the triumphal procession of the Captain of our salvation, in token of His victory over death and the grave, and in promise of the final emancipation of all His people.

Therefore, in the prospect of these things, and in the faith of that eternal power and love whereby these things shall be brought to pass, and with the pledges of them already in possession, may not we address to every mourner in Zion the same words which our Saviour spoke to Jairus, "Fear not, only believe?" It is not possible, indeed, to dry up the tears of natural affection, nor would it be desirable so to do. Let them flow freely. They purify the soul. But ever let them flow in faith and hope. Is there one who, like Jairus, has lost a sweet domestic flower, the beauty and the joy of his home? "Fear not, only believe." Yet a little while, and the flower shall spring again more beautiful than ever; yet a little while, and the well-remembered face shall again answer love for love, and in it there shall be what this world cannot show,—the beauty of eternal youth,—the grace of perfect sinlessness. Why should we mourn as those who have no hope, we who believe in a resurrection and an immortality? Surely it is wrong to do so. Surely we should mingle with our natural regret thankfulness to God

for the bright prospects He has opened before us; and surely, rather than repine and chide against Providence, we should make it our earnest concern so to live that we may follow whither our Christian friends have gone, and be united with them in endless fellowship in the house of their Father and our Father, their God and our God? Let us be followers of those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. The more of our friends that go before us, the greater is the number of our friends in heaven; as the circle narrows on the earth, it widens in the skies. Far better that their memory should be to us like the upward beckoning of an angel's finger, than that we should cherish it with fretfulness and repinings. Far better that we should seem to hear their spirit voices saying, 'Come up hither,' than that, though our cry could reach them, we should bid them come down again. They are happier than we could make them. They are gone from the evil that is in the world. We cannot recall them, and it is far better,

"Far better they should sleep a while
 Within the church's shade,
 Nor wake until new heavens, new earth,
 Fit for their new immortal birth,
 For their abiding-place be made."

"Brethren, we would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."
 "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS A PROOF OF LOVING-KINDNESS.

(FEBRUARY 27, 1853.)

“And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand.”—GEN. xxxiii. 10.

MORE than twenty years previous to the time at which the history of Jacob is taken up in this chapter, he had succeeded, by means of an artifice, the morality of which it is impossible to defend, in obtaining from his aged father the blessing intended for his elder brother Esau. The consequence was that Esau was incensed against him, and threatened to have revenge as soon as their father died. To escape the danger to which he was thus exposed, Jacob withdrew to the land of Haran. After residing there with his uncle Laban, and serving him for three successive terms of seven years each, he was now returning to Canaan, with the large possessions he had acquired. As soon as Esau received the tidings of his approach, he arose and set out to meet him at the head of four hundred men. When Jacob heard of this he was greatly alarmed, for he immediately began to fear that Esau had not forgotten the

grievous wrong he had suffered at his hands more than twenty years before, and was now coming to inflict at length the vengeance so long delayed. Accordingly, he took measures forthwith to insure the safety of a part at least of his substance, by dividing his flocks and herds into two portions, so that, if the one should be taken, the other might have an opportunity to escape. At the same time he also detached a number of his servants, who were to go a little way in advance, taking with them a valuable present of sheep, goats, and other animals, by which he hoped the resentment of Esau might be appeased.

Notwithstanding all these precautions, it must still have been an anxious moment when, as is recorded in the first verse of the chapter before us, the brothers came in sight of one another, after so long a separation, and so unhappy an estrangement. Was there to be peace, or was there to be enmity between them? Were they to meet in friendship or in feud? The question was soon answered. Jacob, who was probably riding, dismounted when Esau appeared, and adopted the form of advance which it is customary in the East for a subject to use in approaching a prince. He stopped at intervals seven times, and "bowed himself to the ground." The seventh pause brought him very near his brother. They once more saw each other face to face, and, although "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city," Esau was won; he yielded to the impulse of his heart, and rushed forward to give his

brother a brother's embrace. In the touching language of the sacred record, "he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept." Happy close of their unnatural alienation! "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" And next in excellence to a unity never broken, is a unity restored.

The words of our text are part of what passed between Jacob and Esau, at the time when they were thus reconciled. As you will see at the 5th verse, Esau's first inquiry related to the women and children whom he saw in Jacob's retinue. When informed that they were the members of Jacob's family, his next inquiry related to the flocks and herds he had met a little before. Jacob tells him that they were a present which he had sent. This present Esau declines. His forgiveness did not require to be bought; he had granted it already. But in the text Jacob insists that he should take the present: "Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand."

I beg your very particular attention to these words. They may seem strange words to be selected for the subject of a sermon. You may wonder that I should choose such a topic as the anxiety of Jacob that his brother should not refuse the present which he offered him. You may wonder what religious lessons can be drawn from an incident like this. The incident itself is certainly of very little importance, and I

should never have chosen it for its own sake as the theme of a discourse ; but, at the same time, I consider that it illustrates a principle of human nature, the religious bearings of which are of the highest moment, and this is why I have chosen it for my theme, and why I request you to attend to it particularly.

Let me ask you to observe what that principle is to which I have referred. Jacob felt that the reception of his present by Esau would be a pledge of their reconciliation. If Esau had continued to refuse it, there would have been room for a suspicion in Jacob's mind, that his professions of friendship were not sincere. Therefore, when Jacob presses him to accept the present, he does so upon the ground that his acceptance of it would be a token of his good will,—a sign that the past was really forgotten, and that his revengeful purposes were really abandoned. “If,” says Jacob, “I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand.” The principle of the passage therefore is, that the reception of a present by an offended person—and the same will apply to a service of any kind as well as to a present—is one of the surest signs and most satisfactory pledges that the offence is forgiven, and that the person offended is willing to live for the future in terms of friendship with him from whom the offence was received.

Suppose that a misunderstanding were to arise between any of us, and an old friend with whom we were wont to live on kindly terms, and in the mutual interchange of good offices,—what could more mani-

festly indicate that our friend's heart was turned away from us, than if he no longer came as he used to do to ask us for any little service it might be in our power to render him, and even refused the token of regard we might offer for his acceptance? And should we not hail it as the first indication of returning affection, if he were to come to us in the same kindly trusting way as of yore, and again to ask us to do something for him? We should accept this at once as a proof of forgiveness. It would fully satisfy our minds, that the past was to be forgotten, and that now it would be our own fault if the unhappy alienation that had arisen should not be brought entirely to an end.

If a prodigal son were to return to his father's house, his father might receive him, might allow him to sit down and share in the comforts of the family, while yet, at the same time, he might make a distinction between him and the other members of the household, by never asking him to take a part in the occupations in which they were engaged, by never bidding him perform any service. This would be a very palpable distinction; it would show very clearly that, although he had been received into the house, the reconciliation between his father and himself was not complete. And it would be a very painful distinction; nothing could make it more evident that he was not looked upon with the same warmth with which the rest of the family were regarded. What do you suppose would be the cry of his heart—the exceeding

bitter cry? Would it not be this,—‘ Oh, my father, it is too painful for me to perceive that I have so little place in thine affections! Oh that thou wouldst bid me do something for thee! Oh that thou wouldst give me some commission to fulfil! I care not how humble it is; I care not how difficult it is; only give me something to do for thee; and then I shall know that thou hast really forgiven me, and that I have really a place in thy heart.’ And when his father should come to him, and prescribe him a task, and should give him reason to believe that the execution of the task would be pleasing, this would be the first sign that all coldness had ceased—the first and surest mark of a complete reconciliation.

Now, the same principles of human nature which operate between man and man, have an operation also between man and God, and this very simple and natural human feeling, to which I have called your attention, may help us to understand some important points touching the relation in which we stand to our Creator.

In the first place, I will ask you to observe that upon this principle which I have illustrated, God’s commandments addressed to us, and God’s declaration that our services rendered to Him, in obedience to these commandments, are acceptable in His sight, give us the clearest and most indubitable reason to believe,—what of all possible objects of faith is the most precious,—that He is kindly disposed towards us, and, notwithstanding all our sins, ready to admit

us to the most elevated privileges of His family. I think that the willingness of God to bestow upon us all the blessings, and all the glories of the sons of God, is shown by the very circumstance that we are called to the duties of the sons of God. I do not say that our services are of any value to God, except in so far as He is pleased to regard them with favour; I do not say that it would take away anything from His power and majesty, though we were to oppose His will with all our puny might; I am thoroughly sensible of the unworthiness of all that man can do to be regarded as in itself meritorious; but still I do certainly think that since God has been pleased to command our services, such as they are, and to call our devotion an acceptable sacrifice, unworthy though it is, this is a very clear and satisfactory indication that He is disposed to be our Friend, and a very solid and sufficient reason for believing that He desires our welfare here and hereafter.

Let me remind you for a moment of two incidents recorded in Scripture. Jonah was commanded to go to Nineveh, and preach repentance to that great and wicked city. He shrank from the mission. You know what punishment came upon him for this disobedience. You know too, how, when he made penitent prayer to God, he was delivered from the strange imprisonment into which he had been cast. But what would it be that would be most effectual to convey to the prophet's mind the full assurance that he was really forgiven? What would it be that would

make him feel that the fault he had been guilty of was really pardoned? Would it be merely, would it be chiefly, his deliverance from his punishment? We are told that the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Would not this renewed employment in God's work be the clearest token of forgiveness he could have received, and the token which must have been the most effectual to convey perfect satisfaction to his mind?

When, on the night in which our Saviour was betrayed, the apostle Peter three times denied Him, how was it that the assurance was conveyed to Peter that his grievous sin was not remembered against him? The Lord never said to him in so many words that he was pardoned. No. He took a different but not less satisfactory course. After the resurrection He three times put the question to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and three times added the command, "Feed my sheep." Now, it is obvious to every one that the command virtually contained the pardon. Christ would never have bidden Peter feed His sheep, unless Peter had been forgiven his former sin.

What, then, brethren, is the ground upon which you believe in the loving-kindness of God? Because of His innumerable gifts to you liberally bestowed every day? He gives you life, and health, and strength, and food, and clothing, and friends, and

comforts;—and therefore you believe that He is gracious. A good and powerful reason truly. But I tell you another. He bids you serve, and honour, and glorify Him. He would never have done so unless He had been disposed to be your Friend.

Again, you may say that you believe in the loving-kindness of God, because of the gift of Jesus Christ, His Son, to be your Redeemer; because of the free offers of everlasting life that are made to you through Him; and because of the promise of His Spirit to aid and direct you, and to prepare you for heaven. Good reasons, truly, again I say; reasons entirely irrefragable; reasons sufficient to comfort and uphold you in every strait; yes, truly the best of reasons. But you ought not to lose sight of another reason, hardly less cogent than even these. God bids you serve, and honour, and glorify Him. He bids you be fellow-workers together with Him. He calls you to bring forth the fruits of righteousness unto His praise; and, in addition to all this, He tells you in His Word that though your best services are but imperfect, He will not reject them, nor treat them lightly; He tells you by the apostle Peter that whosoever worketh righteousness is accepted with Him; He tells you by the apostle Paul that what you give for the promotion of His cause in the world is “a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God,” and that the devotion of your faculties to Him is a “living sacrifice acceptable” in His sight; He assures you throughout the whole Scriptures that He is pleased,

for Christ's sake, with whatever you do for His honour, and in obedience to His will; and this assurance is a proof of His loving-kindness hardly less cogent than even the great gift of Jesus Christ to be your Saviour.

This will explain to you why it is that the writers of the Sacred Scriptures have so often expressed their delight in the law of the Lord. You will find such expressions of delight in many places in the Bible, but with peculiar frequency in the Book of Psalms. The 119th Psalm, in particular, abounds with them. There is hardly a verse of it in which they do not occur. "I hate vain thoughts," says the Psalmist, "but thy law do I love." And again, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." It is true that in many of the passages where such expressions are to be found, the law of God, and the statutes of God, and other similar phrases, may be used to mean generally the Divine Word, and not specially the commandments which that Word contains. But in many passages it is certain that they do mean the commandments in particular, and in some the commandments are distinctively mentioned. "I love Thy commandments," it is said; and again, "Thy commandments are my delights." Now, it is, I fear, a general sentiment that such expressions of delight are more suitable to the promises than to the commandments of God. Many people think that the law is rather a terrible thing than a thing to be delighted in; nay, that it is not, and is not intended

to be, delightful at all. A little reflection, however, would convince every thoughtful person, that, while the promises of Scripture are indeed precious, it is equally delightful to read and meditate upon its precepts. To every will that is in harmony with the will of God, the disclosure of His will in commandments, as well as in doctrines and promises, must be an agreeable subject of study; and to love what God has commanded, no less than to desire what God has promised,—to see beauty in the precepts of religion, no less than to perceive the value of its rewards,—is among the necessary marks of a heart that is right with God. But the line of thought we have been pursuing in this sermon suggests an additional reason why the law of the Lord ought to be delighted in, and a reason which might help us to take up the language of the Psalmist with more cordiality than perhaps we sometimes feel able to do. The truth is, every commandment of God has a secret promise hidden within its bosom—a twofold promise—a promise of grace and strength to help our weakness in our endeavours to obey it; and also an implicit declaration, ‘I who have laid this commandment upon thee, am not thine enemy; I am desirous there should be no estrangement at all between thee and me; I am willing to forgive thee all thy sins, and to be thy Friend for evermore.’

And now, brethren, how, in the second place, shall we attain to a sense of reconciliation with God? I do not ask, you will observe, by what arguments we

may be logically convinced of the loving-kindness of God. If that were the question, it would be very easy to answer it, both by the considerations I have already hinted at, or more fully illustrated, and by many other considerations which might be annexed. God's daily gifts of health and strength, and food and raiment; God's mercy, in sparing us in the world, even while we are sinning against Him; the mission of Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son; our privileges of every kind, in all their vast variety and unutterable value, might be adduced to prove that God is a God of grace. But a logical conviction on this subject is not worth much unless it be followed up by something more. It is an impression on the heart, as well as a conviction of the understanding, that we require. We need such a sense of the loving-kindness of God as shall support us under afflictions, and bear us up when trials are pressing on us heavily. What is of real use to us is not merely to be able to reason on God's loving-kindness, not merely to be satisfied of it as a conclusion of the judgment, but to have a sense of it formed within us, an abiding, consoling, sustaining sense of it,—a sense of it as actually extending to our very selves, and wrapping us round about. How shall we attain to a sense of reconciliation of this genuine and permanent kind?

The answer is not difficult. There is no mystery in it. It is reached by simply applying to your relations with God a principle which you can comprehend intelligently enough, and by which your

feelings are regulated in your intercourse with one another. How did Jacob attain to a sense of reconciliation with Esau? By sending his present, by pleading that it might be accepted, and by finding it was accepted. In the same way, on exactly the same principle, is the sense of reconciliation with God to be attained. Remember, I do not say reconciliation itself. *That* depends entirely and alone on the free mercy of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But I say the sense of reconciliation, the clear and comfortable feeling of it in your own minds. Present your gifts to God,—the offering of your service, your obedience, the rectitude of your life and conversation,—plead that this offering may be accepted for Christ's sake,—the sense will grow in your heart that it is accepted, and your feeling of reconciliation will be complete. The more we do of God's work, the more the tokens of reconciliation are passing between Him and us in the gifts He is bestowing, and the services we are humbly endeavouring to render, the more shall we come into the persuasion that we have indeed found grace in His sight. The returned prodigal, though he may have received admission into his father's house, is unhappy and cheerless even there, so long as he is employed on no work for his father's honour and pleasure; he is more than half an outcast, though he receives the food and raiment in which his brethren share, so long as he does not share with them in their activity and occupation. Even so we shall never have the feelings and the comforts of the children of God until we are employed by

the Almighty, or rather (since we are already commanded) until we employ ourselves in His service. Members of the visible Church, and thus admitted within the house of God on earth, and partaking of the spiritual food in which all the children share, we shall still be more than half outcasts till we engage in the occupations of the true children of the kingdom; ay, even though we may be members of the Church invisible, true children by the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, we shall have, even in this case, much of the feeling of outcasts, we shall never enjoy the comforts of our heavenly Father's house, until we give ourselves, with thorough zeal, to the works of the family of God.

My brethren, I trust our present meditation will not be useless to us. Some good at least shall have been accomplished, if it has been made clear to you that the very fact that God commands you to serve Him, and declares His willingness to accept your service, if it be sincere and your best, is itself a proof of loving-kindness towards you; and if you have been satisfied that it is in the way of duty that the blessed sense of reconciliation is to be attained. But the chief good which I would fain desire is a practice corresponding to the doctrine I have tried to teach; and a search for the comforts of religion, not only in the ordinances of religion, excellent and indispensable though these are, but in the use of these, combined with the humble daily offering of ourselves—our faculties, and powers, and wills—as an acceptable sacrifice to our God.

RIGHTEOUSNESS THE TRUE NATURE OF MAN.

(PROBABLY 1856 OR 1857.)

“That which I do I allow not : for what I would, that I do not ;
but what I hate, that do I.”—ROMANS vii. 15.

THERE are two expressions, brethren, which are very often used as synonymous, but between which so great a diversity of meaning exists, and a diversity of meaning of so great practical importance, that a sermon may not be altogether ill spent in endeavouring to point it out for your consideration.

The two expressions to which I refer are these:—‘The depravity of human nature,’ and ‘the natural depravity of man.’ These expressions are frequently employed as if they denoted quite the same thing; they are used interchangeably, as if it were indifferent which of them is chosen. Now, I think, it can be easily shown that, while the one of them is a correct expression, the other is not. When we speak of the depravity of human nature, our form of language is just and accurate; but when we speak of the natural depravity of man, the phrase is not accurate, and, for reasons which I shall endeavour to point out, ought not, I think, to be employed.

If I looked upon this as a mere question of words, certainly I should not consider it worth while to trouble you about it. So long as the great fact of our corruption were admitted, and the important consequences it involves were allowed, I should not be anxious to waste your time with a trifling discussion about the comparative correctness of two forms of language, in which the same truth might be expressed. It is because I think there is more here than a question of words, that I take up the subject. I believe it to be a question of ideas, on which it is of no little consequence to hold a minutely accurate opinion.

With respect to the broad and lamentable fact of human corruption, there can be no doubt whatever. There is room for none. The evidence of it is too plain and too abundant. I will not enter just now at any length into the proof, or into the illustration of it. I need call your attention to nothing more than to the way in which the apostle's language in the text answers to the consciousness of every man. There is great difference of opinion on various points connected with the chapter before us, and upon none more than upon this,—whether the apostle is describing his own experience, as a converted man, striving against the remains of sin; or whether he is describing his own experience before his conversion; or whether he is speaking in the name of a supposed individual, and not in his own name at all. I will not approach this question at present. I will merely say, that,

whether speaking in his own name or not, and, if in his own name, then whether speaking of himself when in a state of grace or not, I believe that he speaks in a manner which is more or less true to the consciousness of every person, when he describes, as he does in the text, a struggle in the mind between good and evil.

If a man is living under the genuine reality of gospel influence, this struggle must be going on within him. Day after day must the warfare be proceeding between the old man, which is corrupt after the deceitful lusts, and the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. But not they alone who are Christianised are conscious of an inward struggle between good and evil. It is a struggle which makes itself felt in some degree in every man. If, in the best of men, there is some evil which resists the good; so, in the worst of men, there is some good which resists the evil. I can hardly imagine that there can be any man so abandoned and degraded, that there is no longer anything in him, which even occasionally, and for a moment, raises its testimony against the wickedness in which he is indulging. Go down among the lower classes of society—I do not mean merely the poorer classes—but go down among those who make no Christian profession at all, who never enter a church door, and you will find there much degradation no doubt, much vice no doubt,—but you will likewise find things from which you will not be able to withhold a certain meed of

approbation, sometimes even of admiration ; you will find in many cases, sterling honesty, and sterling truthfulness ; and to mention what is perhaps *the* virtue of the class, you will find a great deal of sympathy with one another, and kindness to one another, in times of distress. Ay, and if you go down lower still, if you go down to the very depths of society, I believe even there you will find some good—something to show you that the evil which is there indulged in, is yet testified against from within. Even in the lowest condition to which humanity can sink, there are always some faint traces discernible of that image in which it was made. In the middle ages, when materials for writing were scarce and dear, it was a common practice to take some old parchment, on which perhaps a beautiful production of classic eloquence, or the pious thoughts of some father of the Church, or even a portion of Holy Scripture had been written, and to erase this writing, and to make room for writing in its stead some monkish legend, or trifling and even obscene story ; yet still the erasure was not so perfect, but that traces of the old writing continue to be visible ; under the monkish legend or obscene story, you can discern the words of Cicero, or Clement, or St Paul. We might compare the human heart to one of these re-written parchments ; under the lies and vanities, and impurities and pollutions, which it now presents to the eye, there are still discernible some traces of the characters of an older inscription,—some marks

of old letters, sufficient to show that the original writing upon that fleshly tablet was the name and the law of God.

At all events, my brethren, whatever may be the case with the most abandoned of mankind, I feel confident that I can appeal to you for confirmation whispered by your own hearts, of the truth of what the apostle states. Are we not continually doing things which we do not "allow," or, in other words, which our conscience condemns? There is a voice within us testifying for good, but there is, too, something leading us into evil; there is a want of harmony between our knowing and our doing, between even our wishing and our doing; there is something bearing witness for the right, but something likewise overpowering that witness; there are the still discernible letters of the old law written on the fleshly tablet of the heart, but there above them is the more recent and impure writing of some other scribe.

Now, what is it that these inner struggles indicate? This conflict in the heart—what is it that it shows? Plainly that there is something wrong within. Plainly that there is something out of order, that there is something which is not as it ought to be. If all were right within, these struggles could have no place. There could not be two laws in man thus to contend with one another, were it not that something has disturbed the harmonies of his being. That we do what we would not, and do not what we would; that we go in a path which we see to be un-

profitable, and go not in a path which we see to be right; that we are drawn in two ways as if by two opposing forces; that our propensities conflict with our judgment, and our lust with our better reason—does not all this show clearly that there is something wrong?

Yes, brethren, it clearly shows us so; but then the very argument which proves in this way the depravity of our nature, proves equally, when it is fully weighed, that depravity is not natural. There is a great difference between the two things. A depraved nature means that harm has been done to nature; that nature has suffered injury; that, being pure at first, it has become tainted and corrupted; that there has come something over it which renders it no longer truly nature, but a perversion of nature. On the other hand, natural depravity would mean that depravity is not a perversion of nature, a disease of nature, but nature itself. To speak of the depravity of nature is to say that nature is no longer what God made it; but to speak of natural depravity would be to say that God made nature depraved. Now, as I have remarked, those very same inward conflicts which show that there is something wrong within us, show also that this something is not natural. What are the struggles of my better reason against those lusts and passions to which I so often yield, but a testimony that these lusts and passions are not naturally a part of myself, at least in their present lawlessness and turbulence; that they are not a part of myself as

God made me ; that they are an exerescence on my nature, to be pruned away ? The fundamental explanation of all such experiences is, and only can be, that we are bearing something about us which our deep instincts tells us ought not to be there ; something which is not natural to us, and which ought therefore to be resisted and driven from us ;—something which has taken hold upon our nature, but is not nature ;—something which is to be wept for, to be fought against, to be destroyed.

A fall implies not only the existence of evil, but the prior existence of good. If you see a number of rough and seemingly shapeless stones lying scattered on the ground, this tells little ; but when you take them up and examine them, and find among them, or upon them the traces of the skill of the sculptor,—when you discover among the rubbish the fragment of a well-turned limb or graceful countenance,—it is then you see that what was once a noble creation of art has been dashed to picces in this place. Or if you were travelling through a desert, your mind would derive an impression of sadness from the arid and monotonous sterility of the scene ; but that impression would be deepened, and you would feel the desolation to be still more utter, were you to come upon the ruins of some city in the midst of the wilderness, where loathsome creatures were making their dens in what once had been the abode of luxury and refinement. Even so it is the lines of departed beauty, and the fragments of shattered grandeur still to be found

in the constitution of man, which both prove the best that a fall has taken place, and impress us with the deepest sense of how sad that fall has been.

I hope you will not mistake what I have stated. I hope I have said so plainly, that we are at present in a fallen and depraved condition, that you will not think I am teaching anything at variance with that truth. In the face of evidence so lamentably clear, as the state of the world and the consciousness of our own hearts furnish us with, it is not to be denied for a single moment that we are indeed in a depraved condition. I am not affirming with the Pelagians that man is born still into the world in as good a condition as that in which Adam was when he was placed in it at first. This I am not saying, and I do not believe. I believe we are all corrupt. I believe we are all born corrupt. I am only protesting against the idea that this corruption belongs to the original nature of man. There is universal depravity,—that is too true; there is inherited depravity,—that also is too true. I do not object to either of these phrases; but I do object to the phrase ‘natural depravity,’ because that is a phrase which seems inaccurate and inappropriate. In the strict sense of the word, depravity is not natural, it is anti-natural; it is a perversion of nature, a violence done to nature, a mischief superadded upon a nature which God made pure and holy.

‘We are sinners by nature;’ this is a common expression, and in the sense in which it is used, it is

perfectly true and just. But in this expression the sense in which nature is employed is a loose one, and the meaning simply is that we inherit from our fallen progenitors a constitution of soul which makes us predisposed to commit sin, a constitution so predisposed because of their transgression. "By nature," wrote the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, "we were the children of wrath." Here again the term nature is used with the same laxity. The apostle means that they, like other men, were born in a state of soul injured by their descent, and not at all that this was the original nature of man.

But you will perhaps ask me, 'What is the use of protesting so strongly against an idea which no person entertains? No person supposes that God made man with a depraved nature. We all know that God made man upright. We all know that our first parents came from their Creator's hands formed after His own image, in righteousness and holiness. What is the use then of arguing for this, which we all know and believe? You need not take so much trouble to tell us what we are all aware of, that depravity is not a part of the original constitution of man.'

I am not sure that the trouble is of so little necessity as you may at first suppose. On the contrary, I feel deeply persuaded that there is much good use which may be served by fixing our thoughts firmly and distinctly on the obvious truths which I have endeavoured to state. I will ask you if you have never felt this,—answer me in your hearts if, as I

speak for myself, I do not speak for all,—when you have done wrong, and your conscience has checked you for it, have you never justified yourselves, and driven away those compunctions and those fears which you ought rather to have cherished, by throwing the blame of your transgression on the depravity of the nature God has given you? Have you never whispered to yourselves thus in your hearts—‘I was led into that sin by the lusts and passions of my being; but these lusts and passions are a part of my nature; a part of the constitution of my soul; it cannot be that God, who placed them within me, will blame me severely, or punish me harshly, for acting according to my nature?’ Have you never whispered to yourselves thus in your hearts, and so cast the blame of your transgressions upon your nature, and therefore upon God? I tell you, brethren, it was not your nature to which you yielded, it was not anything that God put in you which led you astray. You yielded to corruption. It was not that you followed nature; it was that you did not resist the Wicked One.

And it is only when one comes to feel deeply that all sin is a perversion of one’s true nature, that he will resist it with proper determination, and therefore with success. When I see that there is something in me which does not truly belong to me, but which has been imposed upon me by my worst enemy, to my grievous harm, it is then that I will rouse myself to battle against it, to resist its dominion over me, and to oppose it in deadly conflict. If sin is

natural, I shall resist it in vain, for vainly does any one contend with nature, or strive to become what God did not intend him to be; but if sin is unnatural, if it is a disease of my heart, then when I feel this profoundly, will I strive and pray to have it cured, then will I submit myself to the Divine prescriptions, then will I take the Divine medicine, then will I seek to know and to obey the truth of God. While I accept it as the rule and law of my being, I will tamely submit to and acquiesce in it; but when I regard it as a lawless usurpation committed upon me by Satan, then will I rise against it, then will I rejoice that there is One mightier than I am, who has broken Satan's power, then will I seek and pray in the strength of my great Deliverer, Jesus Christ, to be released from the bondage which oppresses me, and blessed with the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is when I feel that I am made for something better than I am,—that there is a dignity about my nature which it does not at present display, but which it was made to display,—it is then I will feel it impossible to remain any longer under the yoke that binds me down; it is then that I will begin to struggle upwards, with an earnest heart, determined for freedom. And this is freedom, even the true freedom of a man, when all that is unnatural is banished away, and he is restored to that likeness of God, which is the true type of his own natural being.

And the same thoughts which, when they are thus entertained, cannot fail to arouse us to the great work

and duty of our lives, tend also to assure us of ultimate success in any conflict we faithfully and earnestly urge against sin. It is because righteousness is the true nature of man, that we may feel assured that God will help us by His Spirit, if we endeavour to become righteous; for God, the author of nature, must be the enemy of all its perversions, and the ready friend of all who are striving back from these perversions, into the truth and harmony of their being. No fear for any man who labours in the strength of the Divine grace to return to the likeness of God. He cannot fail. Against many weaknesses he may have to contend, but he will not fail at last. He has God's promise. He is in a world that after all is God's world, and not the devil's world. Let him not be discouraged; let him not give himself up; let him not abandon, in despair, an effort so noble. Humbly confessing the sins of his past life, humbly begging the forgiveness of them for the sake of Jesus Christ, humbly imploring the aid of the blessed Spirit, humbly and hopefully let him struggle on. More and more will the yoke of his soul's bondage be slackened; more and more will his liberty be restored; till at last there will be perfect liberty in heaven, because there all perversions of nature will have been removed, and the soul, restored to the harmony of its being, will sound peaceful hallelujahs for ever and ever.

MAN'S NEED OF HELP FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(DECEMBER 5, 1856.)

“To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.”—ROMANS vii. 18, 19.

IN these, and in the connected verses, the apostle presents to us a singularly graphic picture of a mental conflict between the inclinations to good and evil; and, in the following sermon, I am desirous to submit to you a few observations with reference to the state of mind he has thus described.

The state of mind which the apostle has described is this:—A man has a clear perception of the great importance of leading a righteous life. He sees that he owes it to God and to himself to do so. He has, moreover, a high idea of what a righteous life consists in. In his estimation of it, it is no affair of empty profession, nor of form and routine. It implies more than outward decency. It implies a conformity of heart to the will of the Most High. It implies a right state of the inner, as well as of the outer man, and the latter chiefly as founded upon, and arising out of the former. Nor does he only *see* all this; he

desires to attain to it. He can solemnly declare, as in the presence of Him who trieth the reins of the children of men, that he often feels, perhaps that he habitually feels, a wish; a real, genuine, earnest wish to become the kind of man he sees so distinctly he ought to be. This he desires—desires truly. Sometimes, in the thoughts of his closet, the desire becomes intensified into an absolute longing. His “very heart and flesh cry out.” But with all these upward aspirations, there is a strange something which holds him down. He feels what resembles the painful sensation we are conscious of occasionally in dreams when, though we seem to have the strongest incentive towards making exertion,—though we seem, for example, to be upon the brink of a precipice, over which we are about to fall,—we are without the power of moving hand or foot for our salvation. He feels this in his real, actual, waking life, and in reference to matters which he perceives to be of infinite and eternal consequence. He sees the danger, the disgrace of sin; he sees the beauty, the excellence, the glory of righteousness; but he cannot move. The peril is evident to him, and he would shun it, oh, how anxiously! The blessing is evident to him, and he would grasp it, oh, how gladly! But that miserable *something* holds him bound. Like the Eastern prince we have read of in the story-books of our childhood, who, while retaining the senses and the desires of humanity, is fabled to have had his limbs turned into stone, he sees,

approves, and longs for righteousness; but the limbs of his soul, (if we can be pardoned so quaint an expression,)—its faculties of movement and exertion,—seem petrified. The good that he would he cannot reach. The evil that he would not is still beside him.

Such is the state of mind, then, the apostle has described, and to which we are desirous to speak; and what shall we say?

It is abundantly clear that this is a state of mind which moral preaching at any rate will not relieve. We have a high idea of the value and necessity of moral preaching. We conceive that the great end of Christianity is to make men righteous in the highest sense of that term, and that the nature of Christianity is not understood unless it is seen to have to do with the whole business of life; or, rather itself to be a life derived from Jesus Christ, and animating, or which ought to animate, our whole walk and conversation. In the sinfulness of our hearts we are so apt to forget this, so apt to rest content in profession, in forms of worship, in dead orthodoxy, in anything, in short, which will allow us to retain our sinfulness, that it is highly useful that the preacher of Christianity should take frequent occasion to put before his hearers, as distinctly and strongly as he can, what they are so prone to lose sight of. We value moral preaching, therefore, in its own place, and for its own important uses; but, at the same time, it is abundantly clear that it will not touch, at least so as to comfort and relieve, the state of mind with which we are at pre-

sent concerned. Expound to a man in that state the morality of the Bible, and you do not relieve, you rather aggravate, his difficulty. 'You tell me,'—this will be his answer, the answer of his heart at least, whether he gives expression to it with his lips or not;—'you tell me of the high type of character after which a Christian ought to be fashioned; you tell me of the uprightness, the truthfulness, the charity he ought to display; you tell me of the love to God and man with which he ought to be penetrated; you expound to me the noble principles on which his character ought to be based; you represent to me the comprehensiveness of these principles, and how they ought to govern and direct every step, however apparently insignificant, of his pilgrimage through the world. All this I am glad to hear; I am pleased to have my thoughts upon such subjects refreshed from time to time; but there is something still which I desiderate, and you have not supplied. Everything you tell me I admit; I recognise the beauty of holiness; I see its importance; I confess its necessity; I see that I ought to be a very different man from what I am; I not only see it, but God knows I would fain realise it; yet I cannot; there is some strange prevention upon me, hindering all my efforts. Oh, tell me, if you are able, how to be rid of this; I see the height which I ought to ascend, but my soul is not free to climb; tell me, if you are able, how it may be made free.'

It is clear, then, that the preaching of morality

will not relieve a mind in the state we are at present concerned with. Nor will it be relieved, indeed, even by the preaching of Christ crucified for the forgiveness of our sins. The great question with a mind in the condition supposed,—the question most directly and immediately forcing itself upon its attention,—does not relate so much to the forgiveness of sins that are past, as to the attainment in the future of a righteousness that is seen to be most precious and desirable. Now, undoubtedly, the great love of God and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, manifested in the sacrifice offered up on Calvary, for the sins of the world, is the grand motive towards this righteousness. In preaching Christ, therefore, we are using the instrumentality which God Almighty, in His infinite wisdom and loving-kindness, has been pleased to devise, not only for communicating peace to the soul that is agitated with the sense of transgressions already committed, but also for inciting the soul to aim in future at greater holiness. In preaching Christ, given unto the death because of our offences, we are employing the strongest of all imaginable arguments to convince the mind of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and, at the same time, we are putting forward the most efficacious of all imaginable inducements, to prevail upon the mind to be obedient to Him, who has established such a wonderful claim upon our gratitude and affection. But then, here is the difficulty which still remains in the case of a person who is in the condition to which it is our desire at present

to speak. 'I perceive,' such will be his language, —'I perceive that the sacrifice of Christ is all you describe it to be as an argument, and ought to be all as a motive. I see that it does point out the exceeding sinfulness of sin; I see that for Christ's sake, and out of gratitude to Him and the Father who sent Him, I ought to be leading a holy, saintly life; that the love of Christ should constrain me, I distinctly understand; but then it does not constrain me as it ought to do; it does not exercise upon me the power it ought to exercise; the motives to a holy life are clear enough, and to my intellectual comprehension they are of the strongest description; but somehow they are not doing their work as I am anxious they should do it; they come round me, come near me, yet they seem not to touch me; there is a something which hinders them from exerting effective power. Tell me, if you are able, how that something may be removed.'

What then,—the question recurs,—to meet this state of mind, this common state of mind, this state of mind recognisable, we have no doubt, by some here as the state of mind in which they are,—what then are we to preach?

This first, we think,—*the distinct, explicit, unre-served recognition of what is proved to be a fact by the very existence of such a state of mind, namely, the corruption of human nature, and the consequent and indis-pensable necessity for a supernatural operation in and upon our souls, in order to our becoming what we ought*

to be. We put this first and earnestly; for we are most deeply persuaded that it is out of this twofold conviction that the only possible relief to any one who is longing after righteousness must ultimately spring.

We say there must be, first, a distinct, explicit, unreserved recognition of the fact of the corruption of human nature; and we say that this is proved to be a fact, by the very existence of such a state of mind as we have been speaking about. Is not the proof most clear, evident to the slightest thought, and cogent to demonstration? Suppose there is a machine with wheels that will not work, pinions that will not move, springs that have lost their elasticity, is it not clear that there is something fundamentally wrong with the machine? Here is a soul with faculties, desires, aspirations, but hindered somehow from discharging the functions that belong to its highest life, —is there not something wrong with it, obviously wrong, deeply wrong? There are some physicians who would treat this malady of the soul, as if it were merely a hypochondriacal delusion. The patient in hypochondria may sometimes imagine that he cannot move, when really he is perfectly able to move if he pleased, and would find it so, would he only make the necessary exertion; the inability being wholly in his imagination. To judge from their prescriptions, there are some who appear to think that it is merely a kind of spiritual hypochondria under which the soul is labouring. ‘Exert yourself,’ say they, ‘it is all that is required; make but the effort to live holily;’

attempt it only, and there is no fear of success.' Shallow physicians these, with little understanding of what they are prescribing for! 'We have attempted, we are attempting,' the heart replies to them almost bitterly,—'we have attempted, and we are attempting, we can say before God, that we have endeavoured to be what we ought, and to do what we ought; but we are for ever baffled; it is no imaginary impotency of which we complain; we know the contrary by far too well; we have had experience of the contrary by far too painfully.' Let a man only try to attain to righteousness, and he will succeed in his effort.—No, brethren; we say rather, and we are sure we say truly,—let a man only try, really and earnestly try, to attain to righteousness, and he will come to feel ever more and more how weak and impotent he is. To such a man we shall need no argument to prove the corruption of the heart, other than the argument which will proceed convincingly from within the heart. Addressing such a man, it is an easy text to preach from, that saying of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." That saying of the Lord is just in truth the utterance of his own consciousness, the articulate expression of his own, perhaps inarticulate, experience. His fruitless longings, and his baffled efforts—what language do they speak? Is it not this, silently from within, 'I am under the curse of being something different from what I ought to be; I need to be, as it were, re-made; I need to be re-created; in no other way can

my condition be rectified; somehow I must be rendered a new creature?’

But all this, we may be told, is very comfortless teaching even yet. ‘You have pressed it upon us that human nature is depraved; you have urged the fact that we are prone to evil, and impotent towards good, and wholly unequal to the attainment, by any effort we are able to make, of that righteousness we perceive to be so desirable, nay, so essential;—but all this is very comfortless teaching.’ Yes, brethren, we grant it. Very comfortless teaching. Tending towards comfort though; for we have another word to add, towards the thankful, cordial reception of which the acknowledgment is necessary of those things we have pressed upon you hitherto. It would be very comfortless teaching, but for this which we desire to say now in addition—and all that has been said already, has been said in the hope that it might prepare your minds for receiving this more gladly, and for recognising more distinctly its adaptation to the real living wants and yearnings of the human soul,—THE ALMIGHTY SPIRIT OF GOD IS Poured OUT TO WORK WITHIN US WHAT IS PLEASING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND OUR OWN CONSCIENCES.

The doctrine of a supernatural operation in and upon the mind is conceived by some to be a fanatical extravagance; we hold it to be a sober truth; and we hail it with all thankfulness as *the* truth which meets those demands of the heart which are the deepest and most pressing:—one class at least of these

demands;—for, as it is the sacrifice of our blessed Lord which meets the demand of the awakened sinner for some good ground of hope that his past transgressions will be forgiven; so, it is the mission of the Spirit which meets the no less pressing demand of him in whom there has been produced the sacred thirst after righteousness, for some good ground of hope that he will not be left to strive entirely in vain for that which, he soon comes to feel, he will strive for in vain, if abandoned to his own weakness. We are under the power of strong inclinations to sin; every candid person will confess it; we must be cleansed from sin, and become righteous, in order to attain the kingdom of heaven; our own conscience and the Word of God equally assure us of it. As God, then, is honest and sincere, and does not mean to mock our infirmity in those invitations and commandments which He has addressed to us, we must believe that He is ready to furnish us with sufficient strength to comply with the one, and obey the other; and on this ground we hold that the doctrine of the Spirit belongs essentially to the scheme of salvation, His operations in and upon the heart being no less necessary than the sacrifice of Christ was necessary. Nor can any language be more plain and full than the language happily is in which His operation is promised in the Holy Scripture. That the manner of that operation cannot be comprehended, will be no difficulty to a modest thinker. And if he is an earnest aspirer as well as a modest thinker, it will not

only be no difficulty, but he will rejoice with exceeding joy in what we believe to be the only, as, thank God, it is an all-sufficient, relief from the dread of ultimate failure in that greatest and most essential of all human works,—the work of becoming good.

Such, then, we conceive to be, doctrinally, the comforting word which it is given the Christian minister to speak to those who may be in the condition of mind to which we have meant our remarks to apply, and to which we hope it will be felt that they do apply. But what to do practically? Let us speak a single word to that question, What to do practically? The answer is here: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—"*to them that ask him,*"—*therefore pray.* That is what to do practically. It is by the operation of the Spirit in and upon the heart, that the great work is to be accomplished; but the Spirit is given to them that ask Him; therefore the recourse of the aspirer is to pray. Every time you are conscious of feelings such as those expressed in the text, your heart is addressing an inward call to you to go to the footstool of the throne of grace, and pray for the aid of the blessed Spirit. Every time you have the painful experience of an inclination to sin overmastering and keeping down the inclination to righteousness, the voice of that experience is,—and good were it for us all to

know distinctly that it is so,—seek earnestly for the grace of Heaven.

In a former part of this sermon we compared the state of mind we have been describing to that feeling of which we are sometimes conscious in sleep, when we seem to see a danger from which we cannot flee, and a deliverance of which we cannot avail ourselves ;—as, in that condition of body, the spell is broken when we become able to cry out, so, in this condition of soul, it is broken when we cry to God. When, with the apostle in the last verse but one of this chapter, our sense of the evil of sin and of the firmness with which it holds us bound, draws out at length the bitter cry, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” it is then we are in the way to become able to join in the words next following, “ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Perhaps we may have sometimes thought that the transition from the despondency of the 24th verse to the hope and thankfulness of the 25th, is not quite natural. But it *is* natural. Most truly so. For it is then,—when we are led to despair of self, to despair of all help but that which cometh from above, and so to cry aloud to God from the depths in which we are ;—it is then the spell of sin is broken, and hope and gladness begin their happy reign.

Briefly, and in conclusion, to condense into a few words all that we have tried to say. Upon the one hand, God and our own consciences have placed before

us dissuasions from sin, and incentives to righteousness, both of the most powerful description. We acknowledge, many of us, and that sincerely, the power which these dissuasions and incentives ought to have. We see that it concerns our welfare, as moral and rational beings, that we should be righteous; that sin is a disgrace; and righteousness the highest of honours and the best of blessings. We see, moreover, as Christians, that we ought to love Him who first loved us, and that for Christ's sake we ought to be dutiful and obedient towards Him in all things. We see clearly that there are motives which ought to touch our hearts with the most devoted piety, and the most affectionate charity. But then, clearly though we see all this, our hearts are still cold, still lamentably destitute of devotedness, still slow, and stubborn, and callous. Here, then, is the difficulty: a most real one in the thoughts of many a longing, aching soul. On the one hand, righteousness desired; on the other hand, sin prevailing. Here is the difficulty; and where is the escape? Doctrinally, we have replied, in a fact of the gospel revelation, always admitted in a loose and general way, but too little prominently brought into view, namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit. And practically, in that which renders this gift available, the habit of earnest and importunate prayer that this Divine Agent would infuse into the motives and inducements placed before us as men and as Christians,

a portion of that omnipotence which belongs to Himself.

We have told you all we have to tell. We deeply feel the interesting nature of that condition of mind to which, according to our light, we have tried to speak. We shall be very thankful if anything we have said shall prove in any degree helpful to any one of our hearers who may be in that condition. But *we should belie the whole tenor of our observations, did we hope for such an effect otherwise than through the blessing following them of the Divine Teacher.* May the Holy Spirit of God be pleased to add that influence, which He alone can bestow, to this humble attempt to exhibit and to glorify His own special and most merciful functions in the economy of salvation!

FAREWELL ADDRESS AT MAINS,
DELIVERED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE COMMUNION
SERVICES.

(JUNE 20, 1858.)

BRETHREN, it is with very peculiar feelings that I now rise to address you. You are aware that, in all human probability, this will be the last address I shall ever have the privilege of delivering to you as Minister of this Parish. There was a question in my mind at one time whether I should ask the Session to fix upon this day, or last Sabbath, for the dispensing of the Communion. I at length resolved upon to-day. And I had reasons for it. I was anxious, to tell you the truth, to avoid the necessity of preaching a farewell sermon. I felt I could not do it. It would have been too painful. So I anticipated. And now I know that I was right, for indeed I can trust myself to say but very little. I had also another reason. I believe you will sympathise with me in it. I thought it might hallow our parting, I thought it might affect our hearts for good, (both yours and mine,) that I should take my leave of you just after we had partaken together once more of the symbols of that Redemption I have been trying

for ten years to preach among you ; just after we had expressed our common faith in the great Saviour ; just after a meeting at the table which I would fain look upon as the presage of another meeting hereafter, where the table shall never be drawn.

I do not wish to speak about myself. I shall speak about myself only a very few words ; yet a few words seem to be necessary. You know I have not sought to leave this Parish. It would have been ill my part to do so after receiving in it the kindness I have done. I did not feel the tie between us to be a slight one ; and you know I have repeatedly declined to consent to its being broken. This time last year I believed, and was quite willing to believe, that my lot for life would be in this valley ; but when once more I was requested, most unexpectedly, to undertake a charge, which certainly possessed the claim of presenting a wide field of usefulness, considering all the circumstances,—considering the representations that were made to me,—considering my duty to the Church,—I did not see that I could any longer stand back ; although, so far as personal inclination was concerned, I could well have been content to have passed my days in the quiet of the country. That was not so to be. Following, as I think, and as I believe, if all could be told you, you would agree with me in thinking, a manifest leading of Providence, I am about to enter on another sphere of labour. I shall do so with fear and trembling. I desire to do so in utter self-distrust and simple faith in God.

I have to thank you for the many kindnesses I have received at your hands since I came among you. No Minister, I am sure, in all Scotland has experienced greater kindness than I have done. I have to thank especially my friends in the Eldership for their countenance and counsels; and my friends who have taught in the Sabbath School for their regular, their disinterested, their most useful exertions. I should not like to have left the Parish without taking a public opportunity to express my gratitude to you all, and to assure you that, so long as I live, I can never cease to remember those years which I have spent here, and which you have done so much in many ways to render pleasing.

I have a parting request to make to you. In the first sermon I preached as Minister of this Parish there were these words,—‘I ask your forbearance, I feel that I shall need it often; I ask your prayers, I feel that I shall need them always.’ I believe you have given me your prayers; I know you have given me your forbearance,—you have given it largely, and no one can be more sensible than I am how large have been the demands I have made upon it. It will be elsewhere hereafter that forbearance will be needed; but I still request your prayers. I sought them at the beginning of my ministry; I seek them again at its conclusion in this place. Will you petition the Almighty in my behalf that He would give me strength, and guidance, and discretion for the onerous work in which I am about to engage?

It is a solemn time this, brethren : to me, perhaps, a more solemn time than to you. To me this day is as it were a milestone in my life. Some of you may, perhaps, consider it as in some sense one also in yours. All of us, I am sure, when we pause and look back, among many occasions for thankfulness, must find also very many for humiliation. Let us try our ways; let us examine ourselves; let us repent us of our sins; let us seek more grace for the time to come. The time flies fast. This is the tenth Communion at which I have presided in this Church, and yet I vividly recollect the first; I recollect the appearance of the tables; I recollect the appearance of the Church; all as if it were of yesterday. These ten years have flown fast. But what responsibilities they have left behind,—on you many, on me more. And they have only brought so much the nearer that final day, when we must all appear before the judgment-seat. How many changes since I first preached here, comparatively short although my ministry has been! How many who were here when I dispensed the sacrament for the first time among you, are now in their graves! An occasion like the present forces us to think how rapidly we are following them. Let us then reflect how deeply it concerns us to see that, however the past may have been used unprofitably, we do some work for God in the brief period that still remains of our probation.

Brethren, my last words must be for God. For ten years I have been endeavouring, according to my

light, to lead your minds to Him ; to show you in Him your Father ; to encourage you to cast on Him the burden of your fears, your doubts, your cares, your troubles. I have made it my rule to speak to you chiefly of His love ; not, indeed, that the Bible is without its threatenings,—not that I have wished to keep them back ; but that I believe the gospel to be in its essence a religion of love, that I believe it is the love of God revealed in Christ, which is the main power to draw the soul to God, and make it feel that love to Him, wherein is the deepest root of righteousness and joy. Yet this once more would I plead with you again for God—for God and for yourselves. Oh, do not shut your eyes and walk in darkness, when the light of His love, the glorious Sun of righteousness is shining all around, shining with a brightness far more bliss-giving to them who will come out of the dark chambers of unbelief, and walk beneath the open heaven, than that orb of the sky, which has beamed out to-day so beautifully on the green fields and trees about us, and smiled down loveliness on this Communion Sabbath. Do not, I beseech you, reject so great a blessing as to rest on the bosom of your Saviour, to have the home of your hearts in the heart of God.

This is salvation, brethren ;—to find escape out of self and into God ; out of self-righteousness, out of self-seeking, and into God, into His love, into a loving spirit of obedience to Him. I have ever tried to teach you that salvation is something far deeper than

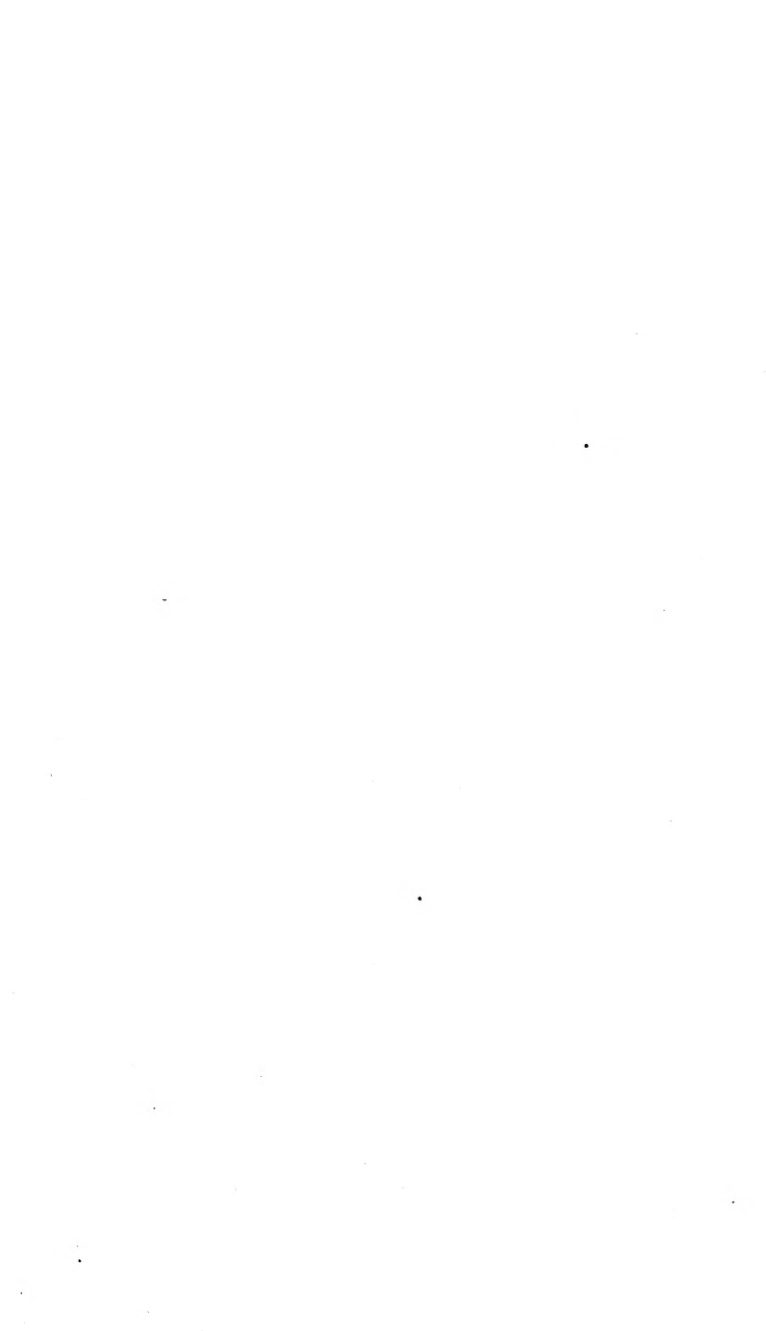
mere deliverance from everlasting burnings. It is deliverance from a state of alienation ; from a guilty conscience ; from a sin-loving will ; from a spirit of rebellion ; from evil, impurity, corruption ; from the dull dissatisfaction, or the bitter agony, of a soul that has lost its Father. It is the will of God that you and I should obtain this salvation, if we seek it. If we seek it earnestly, we shall obtain it certainly. We shall not obtain it, indeed, by our own strength. But God has provided, through the atonement of Christ, to deliver us from one part of our burden,—fear for the past ; and God is providing, through the outpouring of His Spirit, and the teaching of His providence, to deliver us from the rest,—to deliver us from the dominion of evil within our hearts, and educate us up into His likeness. Seek, then, to be partakers in this salvation of God. Seek to be partakers in it more and more. Depend thoroughly on Christ to save you from the condemnation of your sin. Depend upon the aid of the Spirit, look for it, wait for it, pray for it, to help your infirmities. And among all the dispensations of God's providence towards you, ever believe that He has lessons in them for your good, which He means you to learn ; and go through life upon the principle that life is but a school-time for eternity. Whether temporally God prospers you, or sends you trouble, seek always to discover and possess yourselves of the good to your souls that is in His dealings ; and pray to be enabled by His grace to reject and repudiate the evil. Above

all things,—abide in Christ. Look to Him as the source of your life. To abide in Christ, is to abide in faith and prayer. Thus you will be fruitful trees in the vineyard of the Lord. Thus you will be fit at length for a blessed transplanting into the Paradise above.

Brethren, for some years past, I have always concluded the services of the Communion with a certain text of Scripture. I shall conclude to-day, both the services of the Communion, and the hortatory part of my ministry here, with the same text. There are some among us, it is to be feared, who, notwithstanding all our privileges, continue still impenitent and careless;—there may be some among us whose weak and timid faith is harassed with many fears and misgivings;—all of us are very far from having reached that perfect peace which would be heaven on earth to the soul. To the impenitent and careless, that perchance its tenderness may touch and melt them;—to the doubting, that its gracious sound may soothe away their fears;—to all, that it may lead you to come to the true refuge more confidently, to come to it in all straits, in all afflictions, in all difficulties;—to all,—speaking my last words of exhortation from this pulpit, to those whom I request to believe me when I tell them that I hold their welfare very dear,—to all, I would say, in the name and words of Him whose gospel I preach,—“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am

meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace. May the love of God, and the grace of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all! Amen.



PART SECOND.

PART SECOND.

FALSE VIEWS AS TO THE NATURE OF GOD.

JANUARY 11, 1863.

“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”—
PSALM i. 21.

OF course there could not be a greater mistake for any one to fall into. There could not be a greater mistake on the part of any creature whatever—on the part of even the highest archangel. How much more on the part of man—of man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and who is crushed before the moth—of man, so feeble in his powers and limited in his understanding—of man, who knows so little of the very world in which he lives, and even of the constitution of his own being—of man, who is surrounded on every side by mysteries to him insoluble—of man, who is not only intellectually so weak, but morally so perverse, so much in love with what his own conscience condemns as sin and unrighteousness.

The old heathens thought that God was altogether such an one as themselves. They ascribed to their divinities their own lawless and unrighteous passions. I do not suppose, indeed, that the more thoughtful and enlightened of the ancient heathen believed in the mythological stories of the gods. Some of them probably had no faith in these stories at all. By others they were looked upon in an allegorical point of view. But they were current among the multitude. The multitude were content to believe in gods who were monsters of wickedness and cruelty. They thought them altogether such as themselves, only more powerful to give effect to what they might desire. It is easy to see how debasing such ideas must have been. When people worshipped their own lusts deified, they must, of course, have been ever sinking into deeper and deeper degradation. Thus changing, as St Paul expresses it in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible man, it is not wonderful that they sank down into the fearful state of demoralisation which he describes in the same chapter.

Similar notions, leading to similar results, prevail more or less in heathen countries still.

Is there anything like them among ourselves?

Thanks to the light we have obtained from the Christian revelation, we have escaped from these notions in their grosser form. We do not believe in anthropomorphism, as it is called. That is to say, we

do not believe that the Almighty has a body like our own, with hands, feet, eyes, and other members. We know that God is a Spirit. We read and speak of the 'hand of God,' but we do not suppose that a literal hand is intended. We read and speak of 'God's all-searching eye,' but we merely intend figuratively God's all-embracing intelligence. As little do we believe in what is called anthropathism. In one form, I think, we ought to believe in it. But we do not believe in it in the grosser form in which it was believed in by the heathen. We do not imagine that we may attribute to God, without reserve, the passions of the human heart. On the contrary, we should with horror repudiate any such imagination. We should consider it profanity, blasphemy.

But yet, if we reflect a little, we may perhaps discern that we are not altogether free from the old error. Nay, certainly, we are not free from it. We would think it blasphemy to say that God can do unrighteousness. We are ourselves but too prone to do it, but we would think it blasphemy to say that God can do it. Yet we are not, for all this, free from the error; for, though we would not say that God can *do* unrighteousness, we can and do think that God can *tolerate* unrighteousness. We are patient with it ourselves, especially in ourselves. We do not look upon it with the reprobation with which it ought to be regarded. We do not fight against it with the earnestness with which it ought to be fought against. We

can bear with it, and so we think that God will bear with it too; and thus we flatter ourselves in it, and soothe ourselves in it, and say "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

It is precisely with reference to God's imagined toleration of unrighteousness that the psalmist is speaking in the text. You will see, if you look at the verses before, that he has just been describing a wicked man. "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakëst against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." There is no reason to believe that the Jews ever fell into the gross notions about the Deity, to which I have alluded as prevalent among the heathen. The psalmist can hardly mean that the wicked man he describes, actually attributed to God his own shocking unrighteousness. But God kept silence; He did not all at once send forth His judgments; and so the man believed that God at any rate was tolerant of sin.

Just the same belief that is only too prevalent yet; just the same delusion to which our evil hearts gave too much curreney among ourselves;—God will bear at least with our sin and unrighteousness; He will not send forth His judgments against it;

He may not approve; of course, He does not approve; but He will tolerate our sins. I am sure you know that there really is an impression of this kind on the minds of many. I am pretty certain most of us cannot deny but that we have been conscious of it sometimes upon our own. A more dangerous impression there cannot be, or one that is more dishonouring to the Most High. As regards the Most High, it is extremely profane; for, if you will consider the point only a very little, you will see that the psalmist is right, and that, by cherishing such a thought, we virtually attribute to God our own ill passions. And as regards ourselves, it is dangerous to a degree, for it soothes and flatters us in a course of life which must infallibly conduct in the end to shame and sorrow. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

I repeat then, brethren, there could not be a greater mistake than for any one to imagine that God is altogether such an one as himself.

But there is another mistake which may be made upon the other side; and of which, I think, I may say with truth, it is in its own way equally injurious. It may be argued that between God and man there is no real likeness at all. This may be argued, and has of late been argued by some, with a view to the defence of revealed religion; though, for my own part, I agree entirely with those who are of opinion, not only that it is contrary to Scripture and to reason, but that, were it true, revealed religion would be impossible.

Whether you look at the scheme of redemption as expounded in Scripture, or at the order of providence as it develops itself in the world, it is undoubtedly true that questions of great difficulty may be suggested touching the righteousness, the goodness, the mercy, and the other attributes of God. But if you attempt to answer, or rather to silence, these questions by the reply that righteousness, goodness, and mercy as they exist in God, or rather as they are said to exist in God, are something wholly different, not only in degree, but in kind, from righteousness, goodness, and mercy as they exist in man; then, indeed, you may so far gain your object, but it is at a terrible cost; you may silence the sceptic, but it is by an argument which would put an end not only to scepticism, but to faith,—which would put an end to all theology, whether natural or revealed, to all possibility of any knowledge of God.

You may tell me that though God is often spoken of in common language as having hands and eyes and other bodily parts, He has not such bodily parts really, but that the language is a mere accommodation to our human way of speaking. You may tell me this, and this I can understand, without its being implied, that we have, and can have, no real knowledge of God. You may go higher;—you may tell me that when we speak of the Divine understanding there is much in this language too that is mere accommodation to our human weakness: and that God has a cognition of His works, which must be so far different

in kind from that which is open to the human intellect, I can imagine also, and yet that God may be known in a real sense. But if you tell me that mercy and goodness, and the other moral attributes of the Most High, are wholly and essentially different from those in man which are known by the same names, then I cannot see how religion is to be preserved,—how God can be known at all,—how I can even be sure that there is a God,—above all, how I can possibly be in fellowship with Him,—how my spirit can have true communion with His Spirit,—how I can be in any living relation to Him as a spiritual being.

It may, however, be said further, we have got a regulative revelation to tell us how we should live practically, and that is all we need. It is *not* all we need; we need a great deal more. Have men ever been satisfied with being told how to live practically? No, my friends, we need more; by the necessity of our nature we need more, we long for more, and can never be satisfied without it; we need an inward fellowship of the spirit with the Father of our spirits.

Besides, if the regulative revelation is all we need, the revelation which we have got in the Bible is not a true revelation; for it assures us that we need more, and it lays down the rule that we should seek for more. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” What we need, then, according to the revelation, is the knowledge of God, which yet

is pronounced impossible. It is that knowledge for which we are to seek, and long, and pray. And it is that knowledge, too, which, more than anything else, the revelation professes to furnish. For it is not so much rules that we have in the Bible,—especially in the New Testament, though indeed the remark applies to the Old Testament also,—not so much rules, as a manifestation of our Father, that we may know Him and love Him, and so be a rule unto ourselves.

Once more, I have said that you may indeed silence unbelieving questions by taking the ground that righteousness, and goodness, and mercy, as they are said to exist in God, are so said merely by a species of accommodation, and are really quite different from the qualities in man which are known by the same names. But after all it is only one class of difficulties which you could thus smother. Difficulties, for example, about the atonement—such as how it consisted with the righteousness of God to inflict suffering on our innocent Redeemer, and the like—difficulties of this kind you might smother in the way referred to. But then, in that case, what would you make of all those passages where fellowship with God is spoken of? What would you make of all those passages where we read of an indwelling of the Divine Spirit? What account would you give of all those passages where we hear of our being made partakers of the Divine nature? How could there be fellowship with God, or an indwelling of the Divine Spirit, if there were no real relationship,

no point of real moral contact between God and the soul?

My friends, the Scriptures tell us that God created man in His own image. So, we are told at the beginning of the Bible—and very suitably at the beginning—for this truth is the basis of theology and the root of religion. If it be asked to define in what respects we were made in God's likeness, there is no better answer than the old-fashioned one you will find in the Shorter Catechism, "God created man after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures." I would not press for the "knowledge," if any one were disposed to make difficulties upon that point. And as to "dominion over the creatures," it does not matter to the present subject, at least within the limits to which we shall confine ourselves. "Righteousness" and "holiness," in so far as they exist in man, are real features of the Divine image, true counterparts of things which are in God. On this principle, which is thus laid down at the beginning of the Bible, the whole book proceeds. Whatever is good and holy in human nature is used to explain to us the Divine nature. Our own human feelings, sympathies, and affections are constantly put forward in the Bible to explain to us the thoughts and purposes of the Most High.

For example, if the information is to be conveyed to us, that those who penitently seek the favour of God shall not be refused it, how is the object ac-

completed? In this way: our Saviour puts before us the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son. He does not simply tell us in dry, abstract words, that upon confessing our sins, and asking to be forgiven, forgiveness will not be denied us. But He draws the beautiful picture He has done in that parable, and gives us to believe that we may return to God with the same confidence as to a loving father.

Or, again, if the object is to assure us of the efficacy of prayer, the mode adopted is quite the same. "If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Again, you see, men are taught to know God by their own hearts.

Or, once more,—to take a single illustration from the Old Testament,—who does not recall at once that most delightful passage in the 49th chapter of Isaiah, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." *They* may forget; there is that depravity in the human heart which may sometimes arrive at such a pitch as to destroy even the tenderest of human feelings. "Yet will I not forget thee,"—the everlasting love of God is liable to no such obscurity. The whole passage is just an attributing to God of a tenderness of love which only the warmest and

purest of human feelings can adequately express; accompanied with an assurance, that this tenderness of love is never diminished in His case by any of those unholy causes which sometimes dry it up in human bosoms. The whole passage, therefore, proceeds evidently upon the principle to which I have been requesting your attention. And what a precious passage it is! I have seen a mother at the bedside of her dying boy. I have observed how her whole soul seemed wrapped up in him. I have watched wonderingly the unspeakable affection in her full, anxious eye. I have remembered then and there this beautiful saying of the holy book.

There is one thing more, however, which I must say. Let us remember that it was in a man that God chiefly and most clearly made Himself known to the world. The Lord Jesus Christ was God's clearest revelation of Himself. In Him the Almighty made Himself manifest. He was the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person. He said Himself, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." Now, am I to believe that the mercy which was in Christ was something altogether different from the mercy that is in God? Christ was a man; not a mere man certainly—but yet a real man, having all the necessary or essential qualities of human nature. Christ was a man, and His mercy was a man's mercy, and as men we can understand it, however imperfectly we may copy it. Am I to suppose then that the mercy that was in Christ, being

thus a human quality, was something quite different from what is termed mercy in God? Then I say, I have no ground to rest upon at all; I have nothing in the Christian revelation to do me any good; I find nothing to give me any comfort; Christ's life has taught me nothing; that is to say, I know nothing whatever about the mind and character of Him with whom I have to do.

Brethren,—I say it with reverence, but it seems to me to be true,—if it were not the case that there is some real resemblance between the moral nature of God and that of man, there could not have been an Incarnation. Could you imagine the Deity to become incarnate in the nature of a being with whom He had no moral affinity? Some think they defend revealed religion by saying to those who put questions, that they must hold their peace, because in truth the nature of God is so utterly different from that of man, that we cannot know Him at all, and the words we use upon the subject of His character are mere accommodations. But in point of fact, they strike at its very root; if their views be correct, our Lord Jesus Christ must have been a deceiver, for how, then, could the Godhead have become incarnate in a man, any more than in a stock or a stone, or an idol of wood or brass?

We hold, then, as the true doctrine alike of Scripture and of reason, that while it cannot be said that the Divine being is altogether such an one as ourselves, yet neither, on the other hand, can it be held that

there are no points of affinity between His nature and ours. The Divine Being is free from all sin and imperfection; but eliminate sin and imperfection, and then you are right if you believe that there is a real resemblance between man and his Maker, so that we can truly know God, and have confidence in Him.

From these views, if well founded, there follow two consequences, to which I would now direct your thoughts.

First of all, these views make clear the possibility of, and the necessity for, an external revelation of the Divine character.

It is thought by some that an external revelation is unnecessary. It is thought by some that an external revelation is impossible. Impossible it would indeed be, unless there were some real affinity between the human nature and the Divine; as impossible as to convey by words a notion of green, yellow, or blue, to one who has never enjoyed the faculty of sight. What makes a revelation possible, is just that there *is* in us something of kin to the Divine nature, and by which, therefore, God can be known.

What makes it also necessary is, that, while we can only know God by that which is within ourselves, or in other words, by attributing to Him in a perfect degree what is good and holy in man, the good and the holy in man are so mixed up with the evil and the unholy, so obscured and perverted, that without help from without, we should fall into endless mistakes and misconceptions; we should be in danger of

falling back again into the error of the heathen, and attributing to the Almighty, not only what is good and holy, but our own perversities and sins. It might have been that natural religion would have been enough, if men had continued innocent. In that case their own pure hearts might have ascended to a correct knowledge of God. But, fallen and depraved as we are, it needs an external revelation to help us to escape the misleading influence of our own depravity.

Secondly, another and very important practical lesson which follows from the views with which we have been occupied is, that, in order to advance in the knowledge of God, it is of the utmost importance that we be careful of our own moral condition. God's righteousness, and God's truth, and God's mercy, and God's love, will become all the more realities to us, and we may hope to obtain a deeper insight into their depth and excellence, in proportion as we ourselves are becoming more righteous, and true, and merciful, and loving. Not thinking alone will ever give a real sympathising insight into the Divine nature, as manifested in Him who came from the heavens to live on earth, that He might show it forth; not thinking alone, but *thinking* and *being* together,—the one to the other giving mutual help. He that would know God, whether for his personal good, or to make Him known to others, let him add to the thoughtfulness of the student the practical self-cultivation of the Christian; let him not only reflect much, but let him endeavour to live well.

CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE.

(MAY 11, 1862.)

“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”—JOHN xiv. 6.

OUR Lord had just intimated to His disciples that He was about to leave them. He was going to His Father's house to prepare mansions for them. In due time they would follow Him thither by the way which they knew. So He had been saying. But they did not understand Him; at least Thomas did not understand Him. Verse 5th—“Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” Our Saviour replied in the words of the text.

We may well believe that Thomas would not understand these words either. I find it said in some of the commentaries that they contain a clear and distinct explanation on the point as to which he was in difficulty; but I cannot see that they do. We are so accustomed to hear them, that they may seem to us quite plain; but for any one to say to another, “I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life,” does not

appear at the first look a very intelligible statement. "The *way* is to receive and obey the *truth* which I teach you; this is the way to eternal *life*;" one could understand *that*. But "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life;" this is an explanation which requires to be explained. Thomas would come to understand it afterwards, under the promised teaching of the Holy Ghost, but I doubt if he would understand it at the time. I have remarked these things with a view to the further observation, that our ideas of the meaning of the text must be derived, not from itself alone, but from the general teaching of the New Testament.

Before proceeding, however, to seek for this light, let us notice one thing which the text itself *does* suggest strongly. The language our Lord makes use of is very remarkable; it is language He could not possibly have employed unless He had intended to claim for Himself a position quite different from that of a teacher merely. To make this clear:—It was possible to attain to eternal life under the Mosaic economy. Moses might have said, "I *show* you a way in which if you walk, you will come into God's presence with joy; I *teach* you truth, which, though not the whole truth, will yet, if you obey it, insure your salvation; thus I can *guide* you to eternal life." But "I *am* the way; I *am* the truth; I *am* the life," Moses could never have said. No more could any prophet; no more could any apostle; no more could any evangelist. Paul, or Timothy, or Titus,

might have told those to whom they preached that they could show the way that would lead to life; but in the lips of any of them such language as “*I am* the way, *I am* the truth, *I am* the life,” would have been absurd. It is perfectly evident, then, that our Lord speaks here in a higher capacity than that of a teacher only; else, if this be not admitted, He speaks without sense. To which things I call your attention as bearing upon a point very important in its connexion with the evidence of revealed religion, namely, this:—That our Lord certainly did claim a position and functions not only higher than, but different in kind from, those of any other teacher whatever; whence it follows that you have only the alternative, either to admit that claim, or to consider Him a fanatic or a deceiver. The Socinian ground, that He laid claim to nothing more than to be a teacher of higher truth, is utterly untenable. He claimed not only to be a teacher of higher truth, but to be higher than a teacher; He claimed to be something different not merely in degree, but in nature and office, from all other teachers, as the passage before us, even were there none else, would manifestly prove.

But now let us proceed to the exposition of the text; and let us take it clause by clause.

I. “*I am* the way.” There are two great and closely connected doctrines or facts of the holy gospel, which, together, explain this clause; or,

rather, I should call them perhaps, two portions of the one great doctrine or fact of the atonement.

It is not necessary just now that we should ask the reason why, but the Scriptures do certainly teach that the humiliation, the sufferings, and the death of Christ, were requisite in order that the mercy of God might extend to man for his salvation. Different views may be taken as to the nature of the atonement, and the grounds upon which an atonement was required. You may think, and perhaps rightly, that a complete theory on either branch of the subject is beyond the powers of the human mind. But there cannot be a doubt that the Scriptures *do* teach that we are indebted to the life and death of Christ for the good hope toward God we are permitted to cherish, that life and that death having been needful that our sins might be forgiven. He is "the way," therefore, in a true and intelligible sense, as having made propitiation for us, so that through Him we may approach God acceptably.

Then, again, and connected with this, let us take into view the intercession which, it is revealed to us in Scripture, He is continually making for us at the right hand of the Heavenly Majesty. Through Him our prayers go up to the Divine throne. Through Him they are listened to and answered. Unworthy ourselves to draw near to the footstool of the holy God, we can yet, through Him, approach with a humble boldness, believing that we shall be heard, and shall receive, so far as they are good for us, the

things which we petition for in His name. Thus, again, He is "the way," because through His mediation and intercession we have access into the holiest of all, as welcome suppliants at a throne of grace.

So, then, in these two doctrines or facts of the Christian faith, we find an explanation of the first clause of the text. Christ is "the way," because we have access to God through His atonement and His intercession.

II. We come now to the next clause, "I am the truth;" and this clause has its explanation in the most blessed and precious doctrine of Christ's person,—namely, that He was God manifest in the flesh. It is common to say that Christ was the great Revealer of God, who, by His inestimable instructions, has made us acquainted with the Divine character and will. Now this is true, but it is not the whole truth, nor yet indeed the chiefest and most blessed portion of the truth. He was not only the Revealer of God, but He was Himself a revelation of God. Not merely did He say things about God which are written in a Book,—not merely did He inspire His servants to write in that Book still other things which they came to understand only after He had left them, by the illuminating influence of His Holy Spirit,—but He was the Book Himself,—His own character, His own actions, His own life,—that was the grand disclosure to men below of the mind and will of God above. He came in the likeness of our

flesh; He lived among us as one of ourselves; He displayed a uniform, a thorough, a most lively sympathy with human wants and human trials; He never consented to a sin, and yet never turned His back upon a sorrow; no one more uncompromising in rebuking iniquity; no one more tender in allowing for temptations; holy and merciful; just and forbearing; full of a noble hatred of all wrong; full of a noble and most kindly compassion for all who desired to return from the wrong to the right, He could say, "I am the truth," because in all this He was but the manifestation, the declaration, the disclosure of God.

You ask, What is God? It is a question which transcends all other questions in the estimation of a truly awakened heart. 'What is God? What is that great Being with whom I have to do? What is His nature? What are His dispositions? Do not tell me that He is far exalted above all that finite imagination can conceive; do not tell me that man by searching cannot find Him out; do not tell me that all I can ever know about Him must be at the best uncertain and inadequate; I must have some satisfaction as to His character and will, or there is no peace for me. I may not be able, I may never be able, I do not hope to be able to fathom His divine perfections, but there are certain things about Him as to which I cannot bear to be in ignorance or doubt. I must know these, or all is darkness and misery.' What a blessed thing to know that there is a certainty within our reach! What a

blessed thing to be directed to the man Christ Jesus,—the *man* Christ Jesus,—one of ourselves; and to hear Him saying, “I am the truth;” all that I am God is. Oh, what a blessed thing,—how full of joy; how full of comfort and strength; how encouraging to penitence; how cheering to them that mourn for their sins.

Never can we give thanks enough for what is called the mystery of the Incarnation, but which ought rather, perhaps, to be called the revelation of the Incarnation. For a revelation it is, at least as much as a mystery. A mystery, no doubt, that God should have assumed our nature; but that He did assume our nature, how great a revelation there; what a precious light it throws on the most vital questions that can occupy human thought, to learn through the Incarnation that there is in man a real likeness to God; that all which is holy and benevolent in human feeling has a true counterpart in the Divine nature; and, above all, that even as, had He been still upon the earth, we might with perfect trust have brought our sins and sorrows to the feet of Jesus, so we may bring them now and always to that loving Father whom He disclosed!

III. “I am the life.” Just as the second clause of the text is explained by the Incarnation, and the first by the Atonement, so the third clause, to which we now come, is explained by the further Christian doctrine or fact of the Union between Christ and His people. This is one of the leading doctrines of

the New Testament. It is not made so much of in our common theology as some of the other doctrines, but in the Scriptures it occupies a most prominent place.

Our relation to Christ is not simply that of disciples to a teacher, or of followers to a guide, or even of subjects to a king. It is something much more vital than any of these. It is, to use the frequent illustration of the apostle Paul, that of the members of the body to the head; or, to use the illustration employed by our Lord himself, in the 15th chapter of this gospel, that of the branches of a tree to the root. Of course this is a mystery. How it is that Christ dwells in us, and we in Him, no one can explain. Nothing, however, can be more certain than that such is the teaching of Scripture, and that it will not do to explain it as a mere figurative way of describing the powerful influence of His doctrine upon the minds of believers. The parables of the vine and the branches, and of the members of the body and the head, will by no means admit of such an explanation; nor yet will the language of St Paul in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians about the second Adam; nor yet will such an expression as that which he employs concerning himself, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." All these point to a union which is real and vital—mysterious indeed, yet not more mysterious than many of the truths we readily acknowledge and consider fundamental—not more mysteri-

ous, for example, than the two great truths already referred to, of the Incarnation and the Atonement.

Indeed, not to mention these high mysteries of godliness, the headship of the first Adam, from whom our sinfulness descends, involves a mystery in some respects as great as that of the second Adam, from whom proceed those better thoughts and higher impulses which are continually striving against that sinfulness. In the one case, as in the other, the fact is really all that we know. That we have not become so thoroughly depraved and abandoned as to be without any good thoughts whatever, but that in all men there are still some perceptions and desires which bear witness, however faintly, for God and righteousness,—this is owing, according to the Scriptures, to the connexion of our whole race with Him who is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; a connexion we may repudiate and resist till it is broken, and we go into the outer darkness; but a connexion, too, we may wisely and thankfully use and improve till no more darkness remain, and we pass into the perfect light of heaven. Because of this Headship,—because of this vital and vitalising connexion with the members of His body, which members we are,—because of the quickening influence of His Holy Spirit, which goeth forth upon us and into us,—therefore, says Christ, “I am the life.”

IV. This brings us to the fourth clause of the text, on which permit me now to make a few observa-

tions. "No man," our Lord adds, "cometh unto the Father but by me."

Now, my friends, we are bound to accept these words as they stand; but we are not bound to accept all the consequences which have sometimes been deduced from them. There is one consequence in particular, which has seemed to some very plainly to follow from them, but which, I think, does not really follow at all, and which therefore we are not obliged—as, if we were, we should be grieved—to hold. I daresay all of us have felt sometimes an extreme repugnance to believe that the heathen, without exception, must be eternally lost. No one, I imagine, who has aught of that benevolent spirit, which becomes not only a Christian but a man, and who has at all realised the fearful meaning of his own words when he speaks of everlasting perdition, but must often in the course of his thoughts have been conscious of the feeling to which I have alluded.

'But,' it is replied, 'this is not a matter of feeling at all, we must be guided by the Word of God, and does not Christ himself tell us, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me."'" These words do assuredly assert that the salvation of all men who are saved is through the grace and Spirit of Christ, but they do not assert, and we have no right to put this meaning upon them, that all such must have known the name of Christ, and been acquainted, as Christian people have the privilege to be, with the blessed history of his life and

death and resurrection. Abraham and the patriarchs, Moses and David and Daniel, and all the Old Testament saints, were saved through the grace and Spirit of Christ, though none of them ever heard His name. Enoch walked with God, and was accepted in still more ancient days, before even the dim types of the Jewish dispensation had begun faintly to adumbrate the coming of Messiah. There cannot be a doubt surely, but that many of the Jews under the Mosaic dispensation attained to eternal life, and yet it is matter of certainty that they had but very obscure ideas of the Christian facts foreshadowed in their ritual. Nay, there is a more direct argument still. I have quoted already the remarkable saying in the first chapter of this gospel, where St John tells us of Christ, "that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And what meaning can that saying have, unless it be true that the grace and Spirit of Christ may operate, even where His gospel has not yet been preached by the lips of human messengers? If it be the case, that from Him all holy resolutions and pure and pious thoughts proceed, then He is working wheresoever these holy resolutions are formed and these pious thoughts are cherished, and so may be the Saviour of those who shall for the first time learn to praise Him by His name, as the Slain Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, when they join in the worship of the sanctuary which is above.

And now, by way of practical improvement of these four heads of discourse,—

First, let us be very thankful that the way of salvation is open to us all. “I am the way,” says Christ; and the heart of Christ is large and wide enough to hold every man.

Secondly, “I am the truth,” says Christ. Let us, therefore, as we wish for truth, contemplate reverently His character and work. Yes; and what we thus learn, let us not hesitate at all to embrace as truth fully and unreservedly. Thou who art deeply humbled on account of thy sins, and grieved and agitated in thy contrite bosom, do not hesitate to believe most fully, that all that Christ was, God is; and that thou mayst pour out thy penitent petitions at the footstool of His throne, even as, had Jesus the compassionate been still on earth, thou couldst have told to Him thy longings and thy fears. Thou who art in any trouble, fear not to carry that trouble to the mercy-seat, as thou mightst have carried it to Him of Nazareth. And yet, let me to add to these words of comfort a word of warning too. Thou who restest in a barren profession, thou who art pleased with a name to live, do thou also remember that Christ is “the truth,” and bethink thee how He said, “Woe unto you, hypocrites.”

Thirdly, “I am the life,” says Christ. And let us learn from this two things. Let us learn that eternal life is not altogether a future blessing, which we are to get from Christ hereafter, but a present

blessing, too, which we are to look for from Christ now; and let us learn likewise that we can have this present blessing only by partaking in Christ's Spirit. Practically and plainly, let us consider every good thought and holy desire which at any time, and in any way may spring up within us, as a breath of Christ's life; and let us deal with it solemnly and reverently as befits this high idea of what it is,—cherishing it, and honouring it as the very presence of Christ in our hearts.

Finally, Whatever you may think of the views I have ventured to throw out, in connexion with the fourth clause of the text, as touching the possibility of salvation through Christ even to those who have not known His name, *we* have been favoured with that high privilege, and let us not forget that therefore we shall require to give an account. May it be with joy!

CHRIST THE TRUE AND UNIVERSAL LIGHT.

(MAY 18, 1862.)

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—JOHN i. 9.

IN a former sermon which I preached lately, I was led to quote this verse twice. I shall now endeavour to state my views of its meaning more fully than was then possible.

In so doing, I am in some respects upon difficult ground. The text is not an easy one; or at any rate, whatever it may be in itself, a great deal of difficulty has been made about it.

One thing is clear:—It refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is clear from the context. It is the “Word” that “was in the beginning with God,” and “was God,” (vers. 1, 2;) the Word that was “made flesh” in the person of Jesus Christ, (ver. 14.) It is this Divine Word that is described in the text as “the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

But how does the description answer to fact? How does it harmonise with other parts of the New

Testament? Can it be said that everyman that cometh into the world is enlightened—enlightened by Christ? This is what the Evangelist appears to say ; but surely he cannot mean what on the first look one would suppose he does.

My friends, I believe he means nothing else. I believe he means just exactly that which, on the first look, one would suppose he does. Very often, indeed, the plainest and most obvious meaning of Scripture is also the deepest and most spiritual,—far more so than the recondite explanations of commentators. I believe we have an instance in the text ; I believe that if we look at the text fairly and boldly, and take it to mean what it seems to mean, we shall find, upon a little reflection, that any apparent difficulty vanishes, that it harmonises perfectly with the rest of the New Testament, and, at the same time, that it has lessons of its own well worthy of our attention.

One might divide the text into two parts. The Evangelist states two things : he states that there is a light which lighteth every man ; and he states further, that that light is Christ, or more correctly, the Divine Word, which became incarnate in Christ.

The first is matter of observation, the second is matter of revelation.

There is a light which lighteth every man ; this stands to fact. We speak of the darkness of heathenism, and well we may. It is darkness compared with the light of the gospel ; but it is darkness only comparatively, not absolutely. If we go back to the

heathenism of the ancient classical days, we find that there were rays of light which shone there. Men like Socrates and Seneca, and many others that might be named, had wonderfully clear and vivid and enlightenel ideas as to truth and duty. If we look to the heathenism of the present time, I find it stated by those who are best informed upon the subject, that in the Vedas, for example, of the Brahmins, and in the sacred books of China and Japan, there are to be found, among many follies and superstitions, ideas of morality, in some particulars not only correct, but very elevated. It is true that in all heathen countries such correct and elevated views have always been confined to a very limited minority. The bulk of the people have not entered into them. Yet even where the bulk of the people have been most degraded, there has always been some perception of the excellence of goodness. No race of mankind has ever been met with so utterly sunk as to have lost all notion of right and wrong.

This stands to fact, and it is fully acknowledged in the Scriptures. We read the second chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The object of the apostle in that part of his argument to which the second chapter belongs, is to conclude all men under sin. And how does he proceed? how does he conclude the heathen under sin? He does so by referring to the law written in their hearts—by referring to the light which lighted even them. Where there is no law there is no transgression; but, he argues,

this cannot excuse the heathen, for in their case there *is* a law—there is the law of conscience. They *have* a light, not so bright and clear a light as those who possess the great advantage of God's revealed Word, but still they have a light. Such was St Paul's doctrine, and you will see at once how perfectly the text harmonises with it.

But the text goes beyond this: it tells us whence the light cometh—what the light is. The light cometh from Christ; the Divine Word which became incarnate in Christ is the light that lighteth every man.

Now this is matter of pure revelation, as to which there is no place for argument but only for faith. I beg you to observe, however, that St John's doctrine in this particular too, agrees with the doctrine of the New Testament generally. The doctrine of the New Testament is that the second Person of the Trinity was the Creator of the world and of the human race. We read in the chapter before us that all things were made by Him. And St Paul's doctrine is the same; by Christ, he tells us, "God made the worlds." Christ, then, is the Creator of all things, the Creator of the human race. Man was created in the likeness of God; this may be said as the second Person of the Trinity is God—as the Son is the Father's fellow and equal. But most strictly and peculiarly, man was created in the likeness rather of God the Son than of God the Father. It is sonship that is pre-eminently man's position—it is a filial character that

is pre-eminently man's right character. It is as the nature of the Son is manifested in him, that he fills the place in the world he was intended to fill, and displays the likeness he was intended to display. St Paul's constant doctrine about having fellowship with Christ, being partakers of Christ, having Christ in us, sharing in the Divine nature, points always to Christ as the root of man's being, from whom all that is good in man proceeds—at once the author and the perfection of human nature. This is our Lord's own doctrine; it is the doctrine of all those blessed passages where He speaks of being with us, and being in us. Now nothing could be more perfect than the harmony of the text with all this. It makes Christ the origin of all in the human heart that is excellent and Divine, just as the rest of the New Testament does likewise. Why should we think that the light which comes from Christ shines only in the Scriptures? This is surely to narrow the views which the Scriptures themselves propound. If Christ is really the Creator of the world, if He is really the Creator of man, why should we hesitate to understand the text in its plain meaning? for what can be more perfectly in harmony with these facts than what it seems to say,—namely, that He is the light of the world which He made, and that from Him proceed not only those instructions which are to be found in Scripture, but also the teachings of natural conscience, and in short, all bright rays whatsoever?

And now, my friends, there are a number of consequences resulting from these views to which I would beg your attention for a little.

In the first place, I do not think that as Christians we are at all required either to ignore or to undervalue the good there may lie beyond the pale of our own faith. We are not bound to say that what are apparently good actions are evil, and must be so, when done by heathens or unbelievers; that what seems to be noble is really but splendid sin; and what seems to be just and true, only the mask which Satan puts on to disguise himself when he would pass for an angel of light. On the contrary, we are at liberty to hold, I may say we are required to hold, the very opposite. Wherever there is anything that is apparently good and noble, thought, or felt, or done, by man, we are not to try to make out that it is not good and noble at all, but has only the delusive appearance of being so; we are to admit that it is what it looks; we are to rejoice in the light that shineth even in dark places; we are to trace it to its origin in the Sun of righteousness; we are to say with grateful hearts, 'This, though they know it not; this, though they may deny it; this is of Christ our Lord; by this He is testifying for Himself; by this He is claiming these people as His own; by this He is declaring Himself the Lord and Head of them, as of all other human beings; this good is of Him, and witnesses for Him; and we are to be thankful for it, and give Him glory.'

For, secondly, you will see that the simple and obvious view that has been taken of the meaning of the text leads us to give to Christ great glory. It exalts Christ more than any other view that can be held. It magnifies His name, and makes it honourable. What is so glorifying to Christ as to regard Him as the author of all good wherever it exists? How can we magnify his name so much as by seeing and worshipping in Him the one great source of all that is excellent and worthy? We are accustomed to say that from Him all holy thoughts and pious resolutions come. But I think we often hardly mean what we say. We say it as a mere form of language; or, at any rate, with certain tacit mental reservations which greatly do away with its force and value. The holy thoughts we mean are those which are suggested at church or by reading the Bible; the pious resolutions those which are formed under some directly religious exercise. My friends, there ought to be no tacit mental reservation of this sort, or of any sort. The text says, in harmony, as I have tried to show you, with the whole of Scripture, that all good thoughts, right impulses, of whatever form, and suggested by whatever occasion, come from the Lord, are of His Spirit, witness for Him, so that for them all He is to be praised.

One expects to learn something from revelation. We call it revelation, because it reveals to us something we did not know before. I think one of the great blessings of revelation is, that it reveals to us

the truth in the text; and so doing, helps us to take the liberal and hopeful views of which that truth is fitted to be the foundation.

It seems to some to be detracting from the honour due to Christ when we venture to hold the liberal and hopeful views to which I have referred. When one ventures to think that there may be some good even beyond the pale of the Christian Church;—that perhaps not all the millions of the heathen are lost;—that perhaps those of them who live humbly and earnestly according to the light they have may arrive at brighter light hereafter, and may join with Christian saints in the anthem, which shall be raised by that great company which no man can number, (gathered from all nations and kindreds and tribes and tongues,) to Him, of whom an apostle said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him;”—when one ventures to hold such ideas, it seems to some that he is derogating from Christ’s glory. It seems to me the very contrary is nearer the truth by far. Surely it is to exalt the Saviour greatly when one believes, with St John, that there is a light which is more extensive than Christendom; and that this light, wherever it shines, is of Christ. I cannot see that it is possible to glorify Christ more than by claiming for Him, as St John does in the text, that He is the author of all the good that is anywhere in the world.

Thirdly, I believe, then, in the possible salvation of

even some of the heathen. The chief objection which some people have to this belief has, it seems to me, no just force. Their objection is, that if you believe in the possible salvation of such of the heathen as try humbly to walk up to their light, you are making salvation possible apart from Christ,—independently of Christ,—which is unscriptural, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” To this, however, there is a very plain reply,—namely, that we are not making salvation possible independently of Christ, but are claiming for Christ to be the origin of all saving light. We are not saying that any one can be forgiven his sins apart from Christ’s atonement, or that any one can be savingly enlightened apart from Christ’s Spirit. We only say that the benefits which Christ confers through His atonement, and by the agency of His Spirit, may extend further than the knowledge of His name. It is certain that there are blessings derived from Christ, which extend more widely than the knowledge of His name. Why is the human race preserved in existence at all? Why was it not cut off in the germ when sin was introduced? The Scriptural doctrine is that the human race continues to exist, because Christ came forward and offered Himself to take their nature, and die for their redemption in the fulness of time, so that a people might be redeemed unto God. Here, then, is one respect in which all men, even those who do not know His name, derive advantage from Christ; for

His sake they are spared in being. May not other and higher advantages extend also over a wider field than Christendom? At all events to think so is not to be liable to the accusation of making salvation possible apart from Christ.

I am sure too, fourthly, that to think so does not in the least degree diminish the weight of the obligation, which was laid upon the Church by Christ's last commandment, to preach the gospel everywhere. Some one might be disposed to ask, if salvation is possible under any form of religion, what use for making particular effort to spread the knowledge of Christianity? I answer, though every member of a savage tribe may not die of small-pox, is there therefore no use for teaching them vaccination? I answer, though the dimmest torchlight is good, is not the daylight better? In truth, my friends, I think that instead of being weakened by the views we have been considering, the argument for diligence and effort in spreading the gospel is strengthened. If you say to men they must send abroad the knowledge of Christ, because unless they do so, every individual of the countless millions of human beings who inhabit the heathen world will certainly and irremediably perish, men will not believe you. They do not believe in their hearts any such dreadful doctrine, and so, as your appeal goes on a ground which in their hearts they do not believe, it is comparatively weak. It is stronger to say, what I conceive to be really the truth—the truth of Scripture,—not that

all the heathen must certainly and irremediably perish, but just that, though it may be otherwise, yet their advantages are less than our own; many may sleep on through the dim gray mist whom the sunlight would awaken; and those who are awakened can but painfully grope and stumble, when in the sunlight of the gospel they might walk with firm footstep, and head erect, and joyful voice of thanksgiving to the Most High. If by spreading the gospel we can arouse to spiritual activity any slumbering soul; if we can help any earnest thinker; if we can guide more effectually in the way of peace any one who longs to know God and be prepared for eternity; if we can support any tottering step; if we can strengthen any feeble arm; if we can assist any brother to a better and fuller and more sanctifying knowledge of one common Father through Him who is the Brother of us all; in this there is argument enough to induce kind Christian hearts to spend and be spent, that the blessed gospel of our great Lord may have "free course and be glorified."

I might now say, fifthly, as a further inference from the text, that the best way of dealing with the heathen would seem to be that of acknowledging the light they have, and using it to lead them forward to greater light. I might add, sixthly, that among ourselves the best way of making an impression for good on the mind of any one, is to appeal to the good which is in him. There is some good in every one; there is some remnant in every one of the

likeness in which we were made. It is, I am sure, by taking hold of this good, far rather than by threats and denunciations, that one is to be made to feel deeply the sinfulness of the sins by which it is resisted, and also to be led forward to greater good.

I might dwell on these points did time allow. But having regard to the proper brevity of a sermon, I hasten to conclude. And, in conclusion, I have just this to say, that the views with which we have been occupied tend to add great force and emphasis to the exhortation,—Reverence your conscience. Let every man reverence his conscience, and let him do so because it is the voice of Christ. The poet tells us that conscience among the senses is like the king among his knights. Moralists, from the consideration of human nature, have come to the same conclusion; but revelation places the supremacy of conscience on yet a higher ground; it is the voice of the great Lord whom we are bound to reverence as our Creator and our God. When a righteous thought, or a holy desire, when an aspiration after purity, or an impulse of beneficence arises in our hearts, it is as truly the voice of Christ as if we heard Him speaking from the sky. If you ask me to prove it, I cannot. If you ask me why I believe it, it is revealed. But though I cannot prove it, yet I can see that it answers to all the teachings of nature; that it explains to me many things; that it gives a reason for the kingship of conscience; that it accounts for the feeling of which I cannot divest myself, that while I am

judging my own conduct, another is also judging me, another who is above myself and to whom I am subject, who is the King of my spirit. I can see then, that, though what the Scripture tells me as to that in my heart which chides me for sin, and approves whatever is good and holy, is above my reason, it is nevertheless in perfect harmony with my reason.

And O, if it is true that when I am rebuked for my faults, or incited to my duty by what men call conscience, it is indeed a voice of Christ which I am hearing, shall I hear and not obey? Shall I defy the Omnipotent King? Shall I exalt myself against Him and think to prosper? Were a voice to be heard from heaven commanding us to put away malice, and uncharitableness, and evil speaking, and envying, and covetousness, and to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly, we could not be so sure of its being a voice from Christ, as we may be sure that the voice within us is so; for a voice from the sky would behove to be judged by the light within, and we should know it to be the voice of Christ only as it answered the light within. I say, then, once more, and conclude by saying,—Let us reverence the voice, the light within; let us obey that voice, and walk according to that light, else what shall we deserve but the outer darkness?

THE INDWELLING CHRIST.—PART I.

(DECEMBER 7, 1862)

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”
—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

LET us look a little into this passage. The apostle says, “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” What does this mean? You are aware of the meaning commonly attached to it. ‘If one, that is Christ, died for all, if the Son of God required to die for the sake of men, then from the fact that Christ died for our sins, we judge or infer that all men were dead in sin, unable to help themselves, exposed to condemnation, from which they could effect for themselves no deliverance. We have thus in the death of Christ for the sins of those who were in this helpless state, a grand and touching manifestation of His love, by which we are constrained to love Him in return.’

Such is the kind of statement the apostle is often supposed to make in the words before us, and I do not mean to say, that there is any false reasoning in

it. It is sound enough reasoning, so far as I can judge, and quite consistent with other Scripture. From the fact that Christ died for us, we may infer quite reasonably that we must otherwise have been, and have remained, in a state of condemnation and helplessness, because it is not to be imagined that the Almighty would have laid upon His own only begotten and well-beloved Son such a burden of suffering, unless it had been indispensably necessary towards the end in view. And it is equally reasonable to recognise and admit in the great love which our Saviour has displayed in thus consenting to die for sinners, a motive of the very strongest kind leading to Christian obedience. All this stands equally to sense and Scripture. But, nevertheless, it is not the meaning of the text. It is not a correct exhibition of the idea that was in the apostle's mind. Let me try to explain what his idea actually was.

And in order to do this, I must ask you again to look at the words in the text, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." The literal translation of these words is, "if one died for all, then all died;" not "were dead," but "died." "If one died in the room of all," as the Head and Representative of all, "then," says the apostle, "we judge, or consider, that all died." Because He died who is our Head and Representative, therefore we consider that we died in Him; not were dead *in* sin, but died in Him *to* sin; not were dead *in* selfishness, but died in Him *to* selfishness,—so that now we live,

and must live, not unto ourselves any longer, but unto Him and His glory.

Please to observe further that the word ‘that,’ at the beginning of the 15th verse, is printed in italics. This indicates, you are aware, that the word is not in the original, but has been supplied by our translators. In the present instance it would have been better away. The apostle does not mean to say, “We judge, or consider, that Christ died for all, *to the end* that they which live should live unto Him;” He does not mean to state an opinion, but a fact; —“He did die for all towards this end,”—this was the purpose of His dying; not “we judge it was so,” but “it was so.”

And now will you read the text over once more, omitting from the 15th verse the supplied word, and keeping in mind the explanations that have been given as to the 14th? “The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.”

My friends, there is deeper reasoning here than simply that because the Son of God assumed our nature and died in our behalf, therefore we may infer that men were in a state of condemnation and helplessness; and there is a deeper idea than simply that because Christ magnified His love towards us by dying for us when we were sinners, therefore we should love Him in return.

The apostle looks upon Christ as the Head and Representative of men, who not only died for our sake, but who died as our Head and Representative, and in whom therefore we died, even as in Him also, now risen from the dead, we live. We died in the death of Christ. It was our separation from the mere life of the flesh. It was our separation from the life of selfishness, from the life of worldliness. It was our entry upon that higher life of the Spirit which we have through Him who rose again from the dead, and ever liveth to be the giver of life and strength to all the members of His body.

And now you will see, perhaps, what I take to be the meaning of that expression in the opening of the text, "the love of Christ constraineth us." The "love of Christ" may mean "our love to Christ," or "Christ's love to us." The love of one's parents may either denote the love one has to them, or the love they have towards him; which it denotes actually, you must judge from the context. In the same way, "the love of Christ" may mean either "ours to Him," or "His to us." I rather think, however, that in writing the text, there was an idea different from both of these, and deeper than either, which was in the apostle's mind. He was thinking, as we have seen, of that union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which they died in His death and live in His life. May not the same thought underlie his words when he speaks of the love of Christ? He felt a love for the Corinthians, he felt an intense.

anxiety for their good, he is saying (as you will find in the 13th verse) that whatever he was, or might be considered, he wanted to be all for their sakes; and then he goes on to speak of being constrained in this matter by the love of Christ, that Christ who is the Head of men, that Christ in whose death His people died, and in whose life His people live. May not, then, the idea be, that the thing by which the apostle was thus constrained to long for the good of the Corinthians, was the very love of Christ dwelling in him? It was not that he loved them merely because he loved Christ, and so desired to promote Christ's cause in the world; it was not that he loved them merely because Christ had loved *him*, and therefore he was bound to do what he could for Christ's cause; but he regarded his love for them as the love which dwelt in Christ the Head, now dwelling in him also as a member of Christ's body. It requires a little reflection to get hold of this idea, but when one does get hold of it, one sees, I think, what a "constraining" power it is fitted to exercise; what a glory it gives to Christian feeling; and what an impulse it cannot but add to Christian activity on the part of those by whom it is in any measure realised.

One thing is certain: whatever you may understand by the "love of Christ," the second clause of the text does undoubtedly put strongly forward the apostle's frequent idea respecting the close and intimate connexion, amounting to what may be almost called identity, between Christ and His people. It

is certain that the thought in the second clause is what I have mentioned already,—namely, that as Christ is the Head of His people, so they died in His death. In that clause, therefore, we have an expression of the apostle's frequent idea, I might say of the apostle's habitual belief and persuasion—a belief and persuasion by which he was deeply possessed and habitually influenced—that there is a real living connexion between Christ and His people, so close and intimate that, not by any figure of speech, but in literal reality, it may be said that He is in them and they in Him.

This, I observe, was the apostle's habitual belief and persuasion. We find it often coming to the surface in the language of his epistles, and we can see it more or less clearly as a substratum underlying them all. You remember, for example, how he speaks in this epistle of bearing about in his body the “dying of the Lord Jesus,” and of manifesting the “life of Jesus in his mortal flesh.” You remember how he speaks to the Colossians of being “dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,” and again of our being “quickenened together with Him,” of His being “our life,” of our life being “hid with Him in God,” and of His being in us “the hope of glory.” You remember once more how he speaks to the Ephesians of “Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith,” of our being “created in Christ unto good works,” of our growing up “into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole

body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." I do not think we can possibly explain all these passages as metaphors. I do not think we can explain them merely as a way the apostle had of saying that he was under the influence of Christian doctrine, or was indebted for his principles and hopes to what Christ had taught him. If that was all he meant, he certainly took a strange and unheard-of way of saying it. No one else ever thought of using the same kind of language in reference to any teacher by whom he may have been influenced, however deeply. I think the apostle believed that there was an actual truth at the bottom of our Lord's parable of the vine and the branches—an actual truth which He expressed in the memorable saying, "I in you and ye in me."

I am perfectly well aware that all this may be considered mysticism. And no doubt there is something that is mystical in the idea of an indwelling Christ. It does not follow, however, that what is mystical is therefore false or even unimportant. And I think, certainly, that, mystical or not, it was a leading idea of the apostle Paul. Nay, more, I think that one of the great wants of our Protestant theology for the last three hundred years,—I am not sure but that I might use wider words and say, one of the great wants of the theology of the Western Church since a very early period,—has been, that so little prominence comparatively has been given to

the teaching of Holy Scripture regarding the presence of Christ in the heart. No doubt the mystical union of Christ and His people has been acknowledged in all the creeds of Christendom; but it has been in most quarters for a long period of time much more as a theological commonplace than as a living fact; and even as a theological commonplace it has got much less attention than most others. We have had controversies innumerable about the nature of faith, the relation of faith to justification, the nature and extent of the atonement, and so on; but no such living interest has been shown in the high doctrine with which we are at present concerned. I am sure there is not less in the writings of St Paul about the indwelling of Jesus Christ, than there is about justification by faith, or the extent of the atonement, or any other of these great questions of the divines. I am sure there is not less about it, but rather a great deal more, in the writings of St John, and in the recorded words of Jesus Christ himself. And one may say, I think, without presumption, that it will be good for the Church when what is thus conspicuous in Scripture, is equally conspicuous in Church teaching. The Christ of St Paul is not merely He who, concealing His Divine glory under a veil of flesh, died upon Calvary, the just for the unjust, and afterwards rose again from the dead and ascended up into heaven, and there maketh intercession for us, and thence will come to be our judge. The Christ of St Paul is not in heaven only,

but in every faithful heart. The Christ of St Paul is one who not only died for all, but in whom they died too, and who not only lives, but in whom they live. The Christ of St Paul is one whom you—literally almost—crucify afresh when you crush down any good thought or loving suggestion. Fulfilling to His disciples His own promise, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,” the Christ of St Paul is ever near them, dwelling in them in a real, though spiritual sense, helping their infirmities, perfecting His strength in their weakness, inspiring in them their righteous desires, and working in them both to will and to do of God’s good pleasure.

It would be good, I have observed, for the Church, if these views which are so prominent in Scripture were equally prominent in Church teaching. They would not only throw light on a great many things connected with the method of redemption,—they would not only enable us to see below those merely forensic views of the relation between Christ and His people, which are so insufficient and unsatisfactory to many thoughtful minds,—they would not only bring out more clearly the reality of the atonement and justification; but they are fitted to exercise a direct and powerful influence upon our life. If we firmly and clearly believed that we are members of Christ’s body in a true sense, if we attached meaning and reality to the parable of the vine and the branches, if we looked upon our good thoughts as really of Christ’s inspiration, and

a disclosure of His presence in the heart, we should be constrained to respect our Christian position far more than we do, to cherish every holy resolution with greater reverence, and to look with greater horror on the crime of neglecting or resisting the voice of Christ in the soul. I think I can see some explanation of the wonderful zeal and magnanimity of the apostle Paul, in the convictions he had on this subject. Considering himself to be inhabited of Christ, and looking on the various emotions and desires of the spiritual life within him as the manifestation of Christ's presence, there was such elevation and nobleness in his idea of his own calling, that we do not wonder he devoted himself to work it out with the earnestness and fortitude he exhibited.

It is perfectly true that ideas of this sort might be pushed into fanaticism. But truth of all kinds may be abused, which, however, is no argument against its legitimate use. We have conscience and Holy Scripture to enable us to distinguish between such thoughts and suggestions as are of Christ, and such as cannot claim the same divine origin. Distinguishing between them by the aid of these lights, it is not fanaticism for us to follow out ardently whatever we are called to by our heavenly Lord. I wish there were a great deal more fanaticism of the kind.

And now, my brethren, what as to our own estate? Is the same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus? Are we counting that we died in Him to sin, and are we striving to live to righteousness?

He did not live unto Himself, but unto God and His brethren: unto what—unto whom—are *we* living? Are we pursuing our own pleasure and our own profit in the spirit of self-seeking? or are we yielding to a higher Lord? Are we living unto Him and for His sake, and as His servants unto our fellow-creatures? My brethren, let us put these questions to our own hearts; and let us do so with the solemnity of feeling which may well arise from remembering those words: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.”

THE INDWELLING CHRIST.—PART II.

(DECEMBER 14, 1862.)

“Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”—2 Cor. v. 16.

HAVING, last Sunday, endeavoured to explain my views of the meaning of the 14th and 15th verses of this chapter, I mean to attempt a few remarks just now on the verse next following, which, I daresay, may have looked to us sometimes an obscure verse, but on which, as it seems to me, the views we considered lately are fitted to throw light. “Wherefore,” says the apostle,—that is, as a result of his occupation of the standing-ground indicated in the previous verses—as a result of having learned to judge or consider that Christ and His people are one, so that in His death they have died, and in His life they live—“wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”

Let us take the two clauses in succession. Clause 1st—“Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh.” The apostle had learned to look upon his fellow-creatures in a new and different light from that in which he had looked upon them once. Re-

garding our Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of mankind, he had learned to look upon them all, no longer as isolated individuals, but as related to Him who is the Head, and through Him, to one another.

Formerly, for example, it was "after the flesh" that he had known his own countrymen. A Jew was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham,—one of the people to whom the land of Canaan of right belonged,—one who stood widely distinguished from all other men, especially and peculiarly an heir of the promises. Such had been his view formerly. But what was his view now? He had come to the knowledge now, not merely of a God of the Jews, but of a Lord of the whole race. There had been One revealed to him,—there had been One, as he expresses it in the Epistle to the Galatians, revealed *in* him,—One who had "abolished the enmity" between Jew and Gentile,—One in whom all barriers of distinction were broken down. To him now *they* were the children of Abraham who had in their hearts the faith of Abraham; and the best thing in a Jew was not the blood of Abraham, but the faith of Abraham; and if he found the faith of Abraham in a Gentile, then he could not consent to look upon that Gentile according to the flesh, but must acknowledge in him, according to the Spirit, Abraham's child,—nay, truly, the child of God in Jesus Christ his Son. Rising far beyond that narrow, and, as he now saw, fleshly religion of which he had been so proud,—leaving far behind him his former delight in exclusive privileges

and a restricted covenant, ascending far above these "beggarly elements," he had entered, and rejoiced to have entered, on a higher region of the spiritual life, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

My friends, it has been, under God, an incalculable blessing to the whole world that St. Paul thus learned, from looking upon all men in their relation to Christ, not to know any man according to the flesh. It was from this root that there sprang his indomitable determination to assert for the Gentiles their Christian liberty, and their equality of privilege with the descendants of Abraham. He loved his own countrymen very dearly; and though called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, he eagerly used every opportunity of preaching the gospel also to the seed of Abraham; but it was always a gospel of equal privilege and of Christian liberty,—a gospel not of exclusive rights, but of all-embracing love. Such was the gospel he always preached; and we owe it to him more than to any other individual that Christianity was not shackled in its very childhood with the fetters of the ceremonial law,—that it was not encumbered with the carnal ordinances of an effete Judaism, which, however suitable in their own day and for their own purposes, would certainly have prevented the spread of the Christian faith, and destroyed altogether its universal character. For this great blessing the Church and the world are indebted,

under God, to the courage and constancy of St Paul in carrying out his principle, not to know any man after the flesh, but to look upon his fellow-creatures, of whatever lineage, in Him who is the Head of us all.

I have made these remarks because, as it seems to me, the position which St Paul took up and maintained with respect to Jew and Gentile being "all one in Christ Jesus," affords an excellent illustration of the meaning of that portion of the text which is at present before us.

Although the old controversies between the circumcision and the uncircumcision which agitated the Church in the apostle's days have been long happily at an end, there are still not a few important matters of practical duty as to which it were well that we fully understood, and entered into the apostle's view of our fellow-creatures. He looked upon all men in Christ; at least that was his principle. He was a fallible man, and may not always have succeeded; but he tried to do this, and his life and actions proved that he succeeded to a great extent. I do not suppose he puzzled himself with the questions that have been debated since, whether Christ can be considered the Head of all men, or only of some; and if of all men, then how and in what sense of those who are ignorant of Him or deny Him. I believe he looked upon the world comprehensively as a redeemed world, and upon himself as sent into the world by Christ (according to Christ's

own saying in the 17th chapter of John,) even as He also had been sent by the Father; and so he said to himself, 'I must go out into this world, yea, among all people as I have opportunity, to testify to them of the Lord of all; He is their Lord as well as mine, though they may not know Him; I must go and declare Him to them that they may come into His kingdom which is now set up upon the earth.' It was, therefore, the principle of the text, the principle that all men are to be looked on as having relation to Christ their common Lord and Head, which made St Paul so devoted a missionary; and it will be then, I am persuaded,—then, when the Church shall have entered into the same idea with a greater comprehensiveness and liberality than we have yet approached,—that such an irresistible impulse will be given to the good work of the gospel, that the glory of the latter days will draw nigh.

But the principle of the text applies also in countless other ways, and touches, or ought to touch, at a thousand points our most ordinary life. I must leave it to yourselves, however, to make these applications, which are far too numerous to be detailed now. There is room for them throughout the whole sphere of our intercourse with our fellow-men. We are much too prone to look upon our fellow-men either after the flesh only, or after the flesh chiefly,—as humble or eminent, pleasant or disagreeable, rich or poor, rulers or ruled. Now, my brethren, I by no means say that it becomes us as Christians to dis-

regard the outward and earthly distinctions between man and man. These are acknowledged in Scripture, and the principle of the text does not require that it should be otherwise. 'It is true that a man's Christian position is, so to speak, his position in relation to the universe; while riches or poverty, and such like distinctions, are merely in comparison little accidents, affecting only for a short time his position as a citizen of earth. But it would never do to lay it down as a practical rule that we are to judge of men only by their Christian position, for that can be accurately known only to God; and were we to attempt to judge of it, it would lead to pride and uncharitableness, and an offensive and unchristian religious prudery. You can see, however, that without thus judging, or attempting to judge, it may be possible to look upon our brethren generally and comprehensively under the influence of the great idea that Christ is the Head of us all; and you can see too how, if our minds were pervaded by that idea, it would save us, while showing respect, for example, to earthly station, from the least danger of falling into sycophancy; and how, on the other hand again, it would save us from haughtiness, or superciliousness, or neglect, as regards our feelings and conduct towards our inferiors. You can see, in a word, how it would make us honour all men according to the precept, and how it would refine, and civilise, and warm with the glow of kindness and love our whole relations to those around us. You will see, by a little

reflection, this manifoldness of the possible applications of the apostle's view in the first clause of the text, and to that reflection I must leave them, in order that I may proceed now very briefly to make some remarks on the second—

“Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”

Some have supposed that the future apostle, while in Jerusalem prosecuting his studies at the feet of Gamaliel, had seen our blessed Lord, and known something of His miracles and teaching, and that it is to this that he alludes, when he says that he had known Christ after the flesh. There is no sufficient evidence, however, by which this supposition can be supported; and we can hardly believe that if it had been so, there should have been no other reference to the fact anywhere in Scripture. St Paul always speaks so as to leave the impression that he saw the Saviour indeed, but not previous to the vision on the way to Damascus. Others again suppose him to refer to the ideas which he had entertained respecting our Lord before his conversion, and while he was still an unbeliever and a persecutor. He knew about Him; he had heard of His life and doctrines; but he knew about Him not after the Spirit, not as a disciple, but after the flesh unbelievingly. To my mind, this explanation is quite as unsatisfactory as the other. There is a tone about the text and context to which it by no means answers. The meaning cannot be, I think, ‘though I once knew Christ, or knew about

Christ unbelievingly, though I once looked upon Him with fleshly unbelieving eyes, yet now I have learned to behold in Him, with the eye of the Spirit, the Lord of man, and the Saviour of the world.' This does not fall in at all with the train of thought the apostle is pursuing.

I think he is referring, not to the contrast between his view of Christ before and after his conversion, but rather to the progress of his views as he advanced in the spiritual life. At first he knew about Christ as an Almighty Lord whom he had been vainly, and foolishly, and wickedly withstanding, to his own certain destruction if he persevered in that vain and wicked course; this was revealed to him on his way to Damascus. Then gradually he arrived at fuller light. He began to see that this Christ whom he had been withstanding, was not for all that his enemy—was his friend—his truest friend—had died for his sake, and now in heaven longed for his salvation. He began to see that this Christ who had shown Himself by signs and wonders a teacher from heaven, and was at length by His resurrection from the dead declared to be the Son of God with power,—that this Christ in suffering upon Calvary had been God's true sacrifice for the sins of the world, and that this Christ, in rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, had been approved by God as able to save to the very uttermost; and so he passed from fearing to resist the Almighty Lord, to the higher stage of trusting in the merciful Saviour. But still these

views of Christ were only outward and initiatory;—still it was to an external Christ, an external Saviour only, that he was looking; a Saviour who had done things *for* him, rather than a Saviour who was living *in* him; a Saviour who had dwelt in the land of Israel, and had been crucified for his sake without the walls of Jerusalem, rather than a Saviour who still abode, and would abide, in the hearts of His people for evermore. He had now reached a higher spiritual enlightenment, and had come to see these latter truths. He had come to know the Saviour in His fulness, as not only the Saviour who had died for men outwardly in the flesh, but who was living in His Church inwardly in the Spirit. Just as he had learned to look upon his fellow-creatures no longer merely as isolated individuals, but in their relation to the common Head, so he had learned to look upon Christ no longer merely as an external deliverer, but as living in them who also lived in Him. He had arrived, in short, at an insight which was not given him at first; which is seldom given to any at first, but which is precious and delightful; an insight into the meaning and truth of the parable to which we had occasion recently to refer—the parable of the vine and the branches. Christ was now to him not merely the planter of a tree from which he might gather fruit, but Himself the tree, Himself the vine, of which His people are the branches, from which the branches derive life, and which in its entireness consists not of the trunk alone, nor of

the branches alone, but of trunk and branches together.

I conceive then, brethren, that when the apostle speaks of knowing Christ "after the flesh," he refers to those views of His work, which for the most part, or always, chiefly occupy the eye at the commencement of the Divine life, and which, in a higher stage of progress are, never superseded indeed but, filled up and made complete by the further and more spiritual view of a living Christ in the heart, who not only died for us, but in whom we died to all that is selfish and worldly, and who not only lives for us, but in whom we live to all that is loving and heavenly.

God forbid that I should ever speak except in terms of the deepest reverence and gratitude of the work our Saviour did for us in the days of His flesh. It is the basis of our hope toward God, and it were the reverse of progress were we ever to esteem it lightly. We cannot dispense with an historical Christ, who made propitiation for us by His most precious blood, who rose from the grave as the first fruits of them that sleep, and ascended into heaven to prepare a place for His faithful followers. But what I say is, that we must not look *only* to the historical Christ: that to complete the glory of the historical Christ, we must recognise and reverence the indwelling Christ. Pardon of sin through the atonement is neither, as many would seem to think, the highest truth, nor the ultimate blessing of Chris-

tianity. The ultimate blessing is that conformity to God, towards which the pardon of sin is only the first step. The pardon of sin is just the removal of the burden from our shoulders, that we may press forward with hopeful heart and courageous step towards the mark that is set before us as the prize of our high calling—that mark which is also the prize—Christ's likeness in the soul. In other words, what our Lord has done *for* us is only an opening of the way for what He does *in* us. The outward work is necessary to the inward; but the inward work is higher than the outward. By the battle of His life the Lord subdued our enemies, but it was that, having conquered, He might take possession. We remember with admiration the glory of the victory; but greater than the glory of the victory is the glory of the reign. Less glorious in reality, though perhaps more striking to the imagination, to conquer a kingdom, than so to govern it when conquered as to improve its resources, and develop its industry, and advance its civilisation. Even so, though it was a glorious work which the Lord did for His people as the Captain of their salvation, it is more glorious still what He is doing in them as their wise and beneficent King. I say then, again, that the views I have been endeavouring to expound detract nothing from the glory of the historical Christ; to complete His glory, we must recognise and reverence Him as the indwelling Christ.

It is a great and blessed thing to believe in Christ as the sacrifice for the sins of the world; but still, so

long as we look to Him simply as having done things for us, we are only in the first stage of spiritual discernment, we are only looking at Him outwardly and after the flesh. It is one of the grandest results of growth in grace that, coming into sympathy with Him, we learn ever more and more to know Him after the Spirit, that is, as working inwardly,—as giving life,—as the Lord that lives, and not only as the Lord that died.

And now, my brethren, what think ye of Christ? What is He to you? Is He an historical Personage only, or chiefly? Or is He a living Lord? I hope and trust that many of us are looking back with humble faith and sincere gratitude to the work which He accomplished for us upon Calvary, and seeing there at once our ground of confidence toward God, and a strong and persuasive reason for endeavouring to walk before Him in all His commandments and ordinances blameless. But after all, this is but the beginning of religion. We should strive to go on towards perfection; and, not forgetting this work of the past, never ceasing to look upon it with profound thankfulness, we should at the same time press on to the higher stage, and try to get hold of the still more spiritual views, to which, as we have seen, the apostle advanced—Christ on earth the sacrifice for sin, but Christ in you the hope of glory. Are we making progress from faith in the first to the experimental realisation of the second?

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

(DECEMBER 21, 1862.)

“ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. —2 Cor. v. 17-20.

I VENTURED to say, last Sunday, that the apostle Paul does not appear to have always formed, or been anxious to form, the same definite and logically-bounded ideas on certain points, which others after him have tried to arrive at, often perhaps unwisely. For example, in looking abroad upon the world as a field for missionary enterprise, he looked upon it broadly and comprehensively as a redeemed world, and upon Christ as the Redeemer and Head of all men. I think it is impossible to read his epistles without seeing how much he was under the influence of this idea. At the same time, however, it is equally certain, that he speaks also, in frequent passages, of believers in Christ as having relations to the Head of a more special and peculiar kind; occa-

sionally, indeed, as if they only had relations to the Head at all. You have an example in the text,—verse 17th, “if any man be in Christ,”—which would seem to imply that the “all” of the 15th verse must be greatly limited; that not for all did Christ really die; that some only can be strictly described as having Him for their Head and Lord.

Perhaps the explanation may be,—I am inclined to think the explanation is,—that the apostle looked upon all men as related to Christ and having Him for their Head, but yet he did not look upon all as therefore necessarily living members: some were related to Christ only unconsciously, others might be dead members. When a man became livingly conscious of his relationship to Christ, then it might be said of him with a more special meaning that he was united to the Saviour, and a member of the Saviour’s body; and the apostle spoke quite naturally in terms which imply this special union in the case of believers.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” The meaning of this you will see at once if you keep in mind what I formerly attempted to illustrate; namely, the newness of the views which, as we learn from the verse preceding, the apostle felt that he was now taking of everything. He was cut off from his old life. He had risen with Christ. He had risen from the grave of his exclusive Jewish privileges, in which he had been lying dead and buried. He had risen with Christ, and the grave-clothes had been unloosed from his limbs, and they were free.

He was a different man totally—Paul the Apostle from Saul the Pharisee. In this respect he was cut off from his old life altogether; or rather had risen from his old death. In other respects he was still rising. He had not only ceased to look on his fellow-creatures after the flesh, but he was ceasing to look on Christ after the flesh. He was coming to look more and more to the living Christ who was doing things *in* him; he was coming to know Him more after the Spirit; more as Christ the Head, and not simply the Substitute; more as Christ the Life, and not simply the Physician; more as the Vine of which we are the branches, and not simply as the Vine from which we gather grapes. It was thus the apostle felt himself a new creature in consequence of his conscious relationship to Christ Jesus. It must always be so, brethren. Whoever comes into the union of faith with the Son of God, thereby emerges from the grave of selfishness, thereby casts off the grave-clothes, rises with the risen Lord, rises out of the tomb, to work and rejoice as a living man in the real living world of the Almighty. It is not that when our relationship to Christ comes into consciousness, we acquire thereby any new faculties, or are surrounded by external objects different from before; but everything is seen in a new light, everything is invested with a new beauty; new aims are set before us, and new motives occupy our hearts; life is changed and glorified. “Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

“And all things are of God.” Here the apostle is led back by his pious gratitude to the great origin of all the blessings of the gospel. All things are of God. The new creation is altogether of Him. Just as it was His power which created the world in which we dwell, so it is by Him we are created anew in Christ Jesus. Let us always remember that in the new creation all things are of God, for it is this which will lead us to love God with all our heart; and to love God with all the heart is the essence of duty and the fountain of felicity. Let us bless Christ for having suffered for us upon Calvary. Let us bless Christ for pleading for us in heaven. It was—it is—most wonderful love. Let us bless the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who applies the benefits of redemption. But never let us forget that the whole work originated in the infinite compassion of the Eternal Father, and is going on because it is His will. All things were and are of God.

There is another way you may read this clause. You observe that the word “are” is printed in the way which our translators have employed to show that it is not in the original, but has been supplied by them. Let us leave it out. And let us read from the middle of the 17th verse: “Behold all things are + become new, and all things of God.” That is to say, all things are become new, and all things are become things of God. They were not things of God in our estimation before. But now that our relationship to Christ has been brought into con-

consciousness by faith, all things are things of God to us hereafter. That is the newness of them; that is the meaning of them. Now we see God in all things. All things have a Divine reference. The world was formerly, as it might happen, our workshop where we toiled wearily, or our playground where we played thoughtlessly; it is now God's school to train us for eternity. Life was before the little fleeting span between us and the grave; it is now God's teaching season, that He may instruct us for a more durable existence. Our talents,—they are now God's gifts to be used by us as stewards who must give an account. Our fellow-creatures,—they are now no longer masters to be served, or hands to be employed, or a public out of whom to make a profit; but they are our brethren whom we are to love for our common Father's sake. The very face of nature, as we come more and more into conscious relationship and sympathy with Christ—the very face of nature becomes new, being radiant henceforth with a certain unspeakably delightful smile of God.

“All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” Notice the words. ‘Reconciled us to Himself;’ not ‘reconciled Himself to us.’ It is in this way the Scriptures always put it, for the sacred writers delight greatly to magnify the love of God, by representing the barriers between us and Him as barriers of our own making, and Him as coming forward of His own love to break them down. We must not indeed press it as an

inference from this uniform way of speaking, that there was nothing to be removed on God's side in order to our salvation. There was no enmity to be removed. God was never but the compassionate friend of sinful men. Yet there was something to be done that His compassion might extend to them in a practical manner, consistently with His holiness and majesty as the Sovereign of the universe. But He Himself provided the necessary propitiation; and now in consequence of His own love, and through the wonderful redemption He has Himself arranged, there is no barrier at all. None upon His side. Nay, none whatever.

“He hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us,” adds the apostle,—to us, the ministers of Christ's gospel,—“the ministry of reconciliation.” My friends, what is the ministry of reconciliation? The ministry of reconciliation is this, to tell our brethren and try to persuade them that there is no barrier on the side of the Almighty to prevent any sinner from drawing near to Him, and obtaining pardon and eternal life. This is the ministry of reconciliation, even this glad tidings,—The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto Him and live. The Lord is holding out His hand to His sinful children, holding it out tenderly and lovingly. It is the glorious, blessed work of the ministry of reconciliation to take the hand of our brethren and put it into the hand of God.

Such is the ministry of reconciliation. But let us take the apostle's own description of it in the text, for we are not left to gather what it is from other passages: "He hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

"God was in Christ." To proclaim *that*; to tell it to men over and over again, till by God's blessing they come to realise it, is the ministry of reconciliation. "God was in Christ." What a precious truth! Do not let us seek to put any roundabout meanings upon the saying. Let us take it in its simplicity. In its simplicity it is the deepest, grandest, most comforting of truths. It just means what it seems to mean—that God really was in Christ; not merely, that God sent Christ, or that God worked out His gracious purposes by means of Christ, but that God was *in* Christ; so that all that Christ was God is, and in taking the hand of Christ we are taking the hand of God. Oh, one feels he *can* take the hand of Christ. One feels as if it were too strong a figure of speech to speak of taking the hand of God. How can one draw so near to the infinite, eternal majesty of the Creator? But one can draw near and take the hand of Christ, that gentle, loving, tender Man who so pitied all human sorrows and human infirmities. But God was in Christ; and so in drawing near to Him we draw near to the Most High.

But this is not all which the apostle says in his

pregnant abstract of the ministry of reconciliation. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Notice again, as before, "reconciling the world unto himself." Not reconciling Himself unto the world. Still, it begins with God. It is of His own mercy. Well might we have been seeking to draw near to Him; but here He is coming forth to draw near to us. Well might we have sought Him; but here He is seeking us. O wonderful mercy on the part of God! O wonderful perversity and foolishness on the part of man! that on God's side there should be no obstacle to the re-establishment of a thorough friendship between Himself and His sinful creatures; but on man's side so many hindrances should still remain.

"Reconciling the *world*." Mark the liberality of the expression. Mark its comprehensiveness. Reconciling the *world*. As I said before, the apostle did not perplex himself practically in the vain attempt to arrive at definite, logically-bounded conceptions on those deep things of God, touching election and the like, on which much unprofitable discussion has often been bestowed, and which probably in this world will never be unravelled. His view was that God's object and desire was to reconcile the world,—Jew and Gentile,—all men everywhere. People should be diffident in their judgments on such high matters as the decrees of the Almighty, and should remember the great possibility of error, the absolute impossibility of perfect knowledge, in regard to them.

But people need not be diffident in holding that all men are invited to become partakers in the benefits of redemption. Our faculties go far enough to enable us to see quite clearly that that is what the Scriptures say in the most distinct terms, and the principle they always go upon even when it is not expressed. "God will have all men to be saved;" so it is written, and the same thing is written in other words in a hundred other passages; and I do not believe that it is written only because we do not know who the elect are, or, in other words, who those are whom God will have to be saved; but I believe it is written because it is the simple truth; and I believe therefore I am to preach Christ to you freely, because Christ is free,—to you all, because it is the honest fact that He is offered to you all, and not for the mere reason that one cannot tell to whom.

But the apostle adds something more. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing unto men their trespasses.*" This passage has nothing to do with the doctrine of imputation as held by some theologians. It has nothing to do with the imputation either of Adam's sin or of Christ's righteousness. It is not any other person's sin that the apostle is saying God will not impute. He is saying that God was in Christ, not imputing to men their own sins; that is, not dealing with them as sinners, not dealing with them as for their sins they deserved, but showing them undeserved kindness and forbearance. The meaning is the same as that of the

passage in St John, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." This is what we are to preach with the most perfect freeness. This is the gospel of the kingdom we are to proclaim. This is the ministry of reconciliation with which the apostle and his fellow-labourers were put in charge, with which his successors in the preaching office are put in charge still.

My brethren, permit me humbly and affectionately to fulfil, as I can, the functions of this ministry, by once more pressing on you all the free message of the gospel of Jesus Christ,—on you all, for truly it is a free message to every man. I hope and trust that not a few here have already heard it gladly, and received it into their souls, and are living in its comfort and under its power. But there are none here who may not get good from reflecting on it again, and drinking more and more into the richness of its meaning. So, then, let all such as are faithful Christians among you refresh yourselves for life and duty by thinking of the love of God, and allowing yourselves to be more than ever drawn thereby, as it were, into His very bosom. But while there are not a few among us surely who are faithful Christians, living in the comfort of the gospel and under its power, there is no congregation in which there are not some on whose ears the glad tidings have fallen dead,—who have a name to live without the reality of life,—who know not God in the Spirit,—

who are still estranged from Him, not having felt His love, not having learned in any true way what it is to have fellowship with Him. Oh, my brethren, let me deliver to you the message of the Christian ministry yet this once again, if perchance you may be persuaded yet to listen to, and consider it, and receive it, before it be too late. The days are flying; the season of opportunity is passing away. I may be absent from my own pulpit next Sunday, and this, therefore, is most probably the last sermon I shall preach to you this year. With my heart I conclude it in the words of the text, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

CHRISTIANS CHOSEN OF GRACE, BUT UNTO WORKS.

(NOVEMBER 15, 1863.)

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”—JOHN xv. 16.

I HAD intended, had I been able, to have preached from this text on the Sunday following the communion. It seemed to me a suitable text for that occasion. We had just been commemorating the death of Christ. The death of Christ was the crowning proof of His love. And the death of Christ was for sinners—enemies; not for those who had come to throw themselves on His protection and friendship, but for sinners—enemies. The death of Christ was therefore the grandest confirmation and illustration of the first part of His own saying in the text, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

And then again, not only did we commemorate the death of Christ, but we proclaimed our desire and intention to live no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again; in other words, following up the parable with which this chapter opens, we said that, as branches of Christ the Vine,

we hoped, and would seek, by the blessing of God, to bring forth those fruits of righteousness which are to His praise and glory. In connexion with this, at once our declaration, our vow, and our hope, what more suitable and strengthening to be borne in mind than the latter portion of the words before us, where our Lord tells us that what we professed to be our own desire for ourselves is also His desire for us? the very purpose for which we are chosen and ordained being precisely that we should go and bring forth fruit,—the fruit which shall remain unto eternal life.

For these reasons it seemed to me that it might have been suitable to have directed our attention to this subject on the occasion to which I have referred. But why should it now be less so? Why should the remembrance of Christ's love to the death for those who were His enemies be confined to a communion season? Why should our vocation as Christians to bring forth, by His help and grace, the fruits of righteousness to God's glory, be a subject at all special to such a season? My brethren, the sense and remembrance of Christ's love to the death is intended to be the moving power in the heart of the Christian every day of his existence,—the main-spring of his whole activity,—the sap, as it were, to keep by the image of the text, which develops itself into all those fruits of the Spirit which grow and ripen in the vineyard of the Lord.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

My brethren, let us reflect a little upon these words. They were spoken to the apostles. In one sense the apostles had chosen Christ. They had recognised the Divine power and the Divine holiness that were in Him, and they had chosen Him accordingly for their Master,—had chosen to attach themselves to Him as His followers,—nay, with that view had forsaken all. And so in one sense it may be said of us that we have chosen Christ. We have chosen to call ourselves His people. We were baptized into Christ in our early years, and we have chosen to retain the Christian name,—most of us to take upon ourselves openly and publicly the Christian vows. We wait upon Christ's ordinances; and not a few of us, I humbly trust, are really in heart, however imperfectly in measure, what He will acknowledge as branches of the Vine. Thus have we chosen Christ.

But though in this sense we have chosen Christ, the meaning of the text is obvious;—it was in Christ's choice of us that our salvation began. And Christ's choice of us was of grace alone. He came to seek and to save the lost, not because they cried to Him to seek and save them, but simply because they *were* lost. He came and stood between sinners and death, even at the cost of His own death, not because they threw themselves on His protection, but because they were ungodly, and the ungodly must also be the lost, and He desired to save them for their own sake, and for His Father's glory. Thus it was of grace alone that the Saviour chose to come into the world; so do

the Scriptures continually and uniformly teach. And besides, if it is true in one sense that the disciples to whom Christ was speaking had chosen Him, how had they been led to do so? how had they been led to forsake all and follow Him? They saw His glory, but who opened their eyes? They acknowledged the Divine power and holiness that were in His words and in His life, but who inclined and enabled them to do so? It was just the grace of Christ Himself that did all this, or, which is the same thing, the grace of God through Christ, and for Christ's sake. Again is the teaching of Scripture uniform upon this point also. If the hearts of men are opened, it is "the Lord" that opens them. If the wicked repent of their sins, it is the Lord that grants them repentance unto life. If the saved are added daily to the Church, it is the Lord that adds them. If an apostle gives thanks for his high Christian standing, he ascribes it to the Lord's goodness,—“by the grace of God I am what I am.” If he would censure and repress the least approach to spiritual pride, it is on the ground, “who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?”

Thus, though in one sense we may choose Christ, yet ultimately it is in the grace of Christ that our salvation begins. It was so in the instance of the first disciples. It is so in the instance of all men who are saved. Salvation has its origin in grace, for of nothing else than grace—God's grace and Christ's

grace—the Saviour was sent and came. It is of grace that the work proceeds, for we are called by grace, we are justified by grace, and we are enabled to go on in holiness by the grace of Him who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. And as it begins in grace and proceeds by grace, so by grace is it completed and crowned, for “the reward,” too, is “of grace;” and though every man shall have according to his own labour, yet that any man shall have anything is of grace alone.

And all this is the plain and true doctrine of Scripture, and it is important doctrine. It is when I know that salvation is of free grace that the gospel becomes in truth a real gospel to me, for then I know that I have not to wait and make myself holy before I draw near to God; then I know that I may go to Him with all my sins about me, and beseech Him to produce in me that holiness I could never hope to attain except as He will create within me a new heart and a right spirit; then, in a word, I can choose Christ because Christ has chosen me, and offered me Himself, and in Himself redemption. There is great comfort, then, in this doctrine of grace, and there is great power. What an argument it presents to us to draw out our affections towards God and our Saviour! And how well it is adapted to preserve in the soul that humble, dependent frame which of all mental conditions is the most favourable to progress, whether in knowledge or in virtue!

I have been speaking of Christ's choice of us. I have not meant to speak of the doctrine of election. The doctrine of election relates to Christ's choice of particular individuals. I have meant to speak in a more general way—of Christ's choosing to be the Saviour of mankind—of the free grace of Christ in pitying them that were lost, and coming to provide a possible salvation for them at the cost of His own life. And this, I think,—not the doctrine of election in the narrower sense, but the doctrine of free grace in the wider sense—this is that which gives real power and hold to the views of Christianity, which are commonly described as Evangelical. A real power and hold these views certainly have exercised over many minds in by-gone days. And a real power and hold they will doubtless continue to exercise in days yet to come. We may think less than people did once as to those inscrutable questions concerning predestination and reprobation, and to a satisfactory solution of which no man has ever yet made any real approach; we may regard less the human theories concerning the nature and extent of the atonement, with which people used to occupy their minds in a vain attempt to cut into a systematic shape the free and living truth of the New Testament; but though we may not care much for these things, what is of real value in the views described as Evangelical, is that they see in the grace of God, and in the grace of God only, the beginning and the means of human salvation. Their strong point is, that all

is of God. There may have been much mixed up with them which the progress of thought will reject as inaccurate or unnecessary; points may have been insisted on as matters of faith, which may be discovered to be mere human modes of conception, by which truths larger than themselves have been cramped and narrowed; it may be found that some things which men took to be immutable truths of the Most High, have been merely products of a particular age or of a particular philosophy; but beneath all these things, and greater than them all, is the grand fact we have now been pressing. That fact must always have power so long as there remains in the human heart the more or less articulate sense of sin and weakness, than which nothing is more natural in our now fallen estate. That all is of God must have a power to comfort and to sanctify which no other teaching can ever have. No teaching certainly of mere morality; for, however useful after its kind, such teaching gives no answer to the very questions itself is fitted to suggest, as to pardon for our past guilt, and help for our present infirmity: nor any teaching either which, though not of mere morality, is in any manner or degree afraid to say out unreservedly the blessed message of the Highest, that, however we may have transgressed against Him, we are still His children, welcome to come back to Him, and share in all the fulness of His house.

But again, the text tells us further what our sal-

vation is,—what the blessing we are to look for from Christ is. It tells us with what view, to what end, Christ has chosen us. “I have chosen you, and ordained you,”—this does not mean ordained to the office of the apostleship, but simply appointed, just as it might be said of all Christians that they are appointed in like manner,—“I have chosen you and ordained (or appointed) you that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” Here, then, is the object of Christ’s choice, the purpose which Christ’s mercy has before it. We are chosen and appointed that we may go and bring forth fruit. That is the thing we are intended to be good for in the world. Or, as I put it a moment ago, that is the blessing Christ designs for us. And it is worth looking at the subject in this light. It is worth considering that the blessing Christ designs for us is to make us fruitful,—fruitful of good thoughts and words and works,—pious, that is, towards God, and useful to our brethren. Is not this a view which approves itself to the heart? Do not we all feel that to be made fruitful of good thoughts and words and works is to get what is really the best of blessings, without which nothing else whatever could be a blessing permanently? Oh, my brethren, I wish I could put it before you strongly enough what a blessing it is to be fruitful spiritually. The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Think how, if we were

fruitful in all these, there would be heaven upon earth. Think of the pleasures of that charity towards our fellow-creatures which warms and soothes the heart as by a ray of the Divine love shining into the soul. Think of the pleasures of that piety which sees a Father's hand in every chastisement, and a Father's bounty in every gift. Verily a Christian spirit is Paradise within.

And then, as a matter of theory, how easily and naturally does the text make clear the relations between free grace and works of righteousness. "I have chosen you;"—there is free grace. "I have chosen you that ye may go and bring forth fruit;" there is the object of free grace;—there is the gracious thing which free grace does. If the great thing were to put men into heaven, all were dark; for why might not God forgive all men, and put them into heaven? But if the great thing is to make them fit for heaven, to establish a kingdom of God within them, then all is clear. Salvation is of grace, because it is of God's mercy that this object has been taken up, and through God's mercy only that it can be gained. Nevertheless there is no opposition between grace and works, because the very thing which grace contemplates is to make us fit for works in the widest sense,—that is, to make us fruitful of all righteousness, whether of emotion or of action.

Observe once more that the works to which the

disciples were chosen and appointed were to be of a *permanent* character. "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that your fruit should remain.*" It was to be enduring fruit,—fruit that should remain. And so hath it proved. What results are visible to the present day of the labours of the apostles! What influence they have exercised upon the human mind! To what an extent they have affected the course of history and the progress of civilisation! Humble and unlettered though they were, these men proved to be the instruments of the greatest and most far-reaching revolution the world has ever seen. To them it belonged to introduce into the mass of society a little leaven, which ever since has been diffusing its virtue more and more, and so giving promise of the predicted time when it shall leaven the whole lump. But I need not persevere in this strain. My brethren, every true Christian work is work that will remain. There is a durable quality about it which the works of the world have not. For instance, he who has been the means under God of converting a sinner from the error of his ways has done a work which shall outlast the pyramids, which shall survive the very mountains and the solid earth, and shall endure to all eternity in heaven above, an imperishable monument of the grace of God. Ay, and humbler works, too, have the same enduring character if they are truly works of faith and labours of

love; humbler works,—for there is no quiet Christian deed,—there is no unknown struggle in the depths of the heart against any temptation of the devil,—there is no victory, however obscure, of honest principle over carnal self-seeking or worldly seduction,—there is no act of Christian love, however unobtrusive,—there is no cup of cold water given in the Saviour's name and for the Saviour's sake,—but it has its results, small it may be outwardly and on others, yet important and enduring in one's own soul; for all such actions go to form the character and mould the soul into the likeness that will be recognised at the gate of Paradise. Yes, and even works that seem to be unsuccessful have their enduring value; even labour that seems to be lost is of an effect that remaineth. Let those whom you seek to benefit reject your instructions or treat your kindness with ingratitude, there is still a reward of abiding preciousness you have within your own bosom. If the house or the heart into which you seek to convey peace will not receive it, your peace is not lost,—infallibly it will return to you. Thus all true Christian work is work that will remain.

And I would just add, brethren,—let us take a comprehensive view of what true Christian work consists in. True Christian work consists not always in doing things, but sometimes in bearing things; not always in working among others, but sometimes in the quiet cultivation of our own souls. They that

can work among others are undoubtedly bound to do so as God may give them opportunity and strength; all Christians that are leading an active life are bound to perform every daily duty as to God, and to give some portion of their time and vigour to duties that are specially religious. But when God takes away the power of working for Him in the world, it does not follow that the day for Christian work is over. In the sick-room, fighting against impatience and distrust, a work may be done that is truly for God and truly eternal. The fruit of the Spirit is not in deeds alone, but in dispositions, and wherever and however a right disposition towards our Creator and our brethren can be cultivated, the fruit that remaineth may be produced.

So then, my friends, what is the end of it all? What but just this?—let us thank Christ who has chosen us to so great an honour and blessing, as to bear fruit for God to His praise and glory. Let us remember that in the large (which is the correct) sense of Christian work, there is some opportunity for it open to every man, and to each man in every variety of circumstance. And, finally, among all our labours and anxieties about the fleeting concerns of time, let us bear it in mind that the work most of all worth doing is to put all things to a Christian use, which use will remain after time shall be no more, and the world itself shall be burnt up.

I quote once more the words of the apostle:—"The

fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith.” —Brethren, these are the grapes of which shall be made that new wine, whereof with our Redeemer, and all saints, we shall drink in our Father’s kingdom.

SIN CONDEMNED BY THE GOSPEL.

(FEBRUARY 5, 1859.)

“What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.”—ROM. viii. 3.

OBSERVE what the thing is which, it is here stated by the apostle, the law could not do. The thing the apostle states the law could not do is this:—It could not condemn sin. Now what does the apostle mean when he states that the law could not condemn sin? ‘Not condemn sin!’ some one might be disposed at first to reply; ‘the law not condemn sin! on the very contrary, is not this the precise thing which the law can do, and does do, and is peculiarly fitted to do? Is it not the very use of the law, or at any rate one of the chief uses of the law, to condemn sin? Instead of being a thing which the law cannot do, is it not one of the most specific functions the law has to perform? How does the apostle say, then, that the law is destitute of power to condemn sin?’

In one important sense of the words most undoubtedly the law does condemn sin, and that in the strongest manner. It pronounces sentence against

it,—the most fearful sentence. It declares it to be utterly hateful in the sight of God, and speaks of the consequences it tends to bring upon the sinner in language well calculated to make us tremble. So far as attaching penalty to it is concerned, most undoubtedly the law does condemn sin.

But in another, and a still more important sense, what the apostle states is strictly true. The law has power to condemn sin in the way of pronouncing sentence against it; but the law has not power to condemn sin in the estimation of the sinner, so that he shall cease to be disposed to the commission of it. It is one thing to condemn a crime by attaching a certain penalty to it; it is another thing so to condemn the crime in the estimation of the criminal that he shall not feel inclined to be guilty of it, but shall prefer to live in innocence. It is one thing to say to what are called the criminal classes of the population, ‘If you steal, or if you riot, you will be imprisoned or consigned to penal servitude;’ it is another thing so to improve and elevate these classes that they shall not retain the inclination to steal or riot, but shall become honestly industrious and peaceable members of society. The law can do the first, but it cannot do the second. It can condemn the criminal for the crime, but it cannot condemn the crime in the eyes of the criminal, so that he shall not continue a criminal either in deed or in will. The first is the function of the law, but the second is the higher and more beneficent function of education and

religion. The statutes of the realm can accomplish the first directly, but the second only indirectly, through providing and maintaining the means of instruction and cultivation, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. Towards the first object you build your jails and penitentiaries; towards the second, your schools and reformatories. It is universally acknowledged (however we may differ in some instances as to the mode of working out the principle) to be sound and true doctrine in the matter of social economics, that, in order to eradicate vice, the mere negative method of legal repression is not sufficient; there must be a positive implantation of virtue. To overmaster the weeds, you must not only employ the hoe and the harrow; you must so enrich the ground that it will bear a good and strong crop of useful grain. Such is the principle on which many of the best efforts of modern philanthropy are wisely founded. And such, too, is the principle on which that gracious effort of Divine philanthropy, (if I may be permitted to describe it in these terms,) which contemplates and desires the salvation of us all through the gift and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is likewise based.

But the apostle not only tells us in the text that the law is weak to condemn sin: he also indicates the reason why. It is weak "through the flesh." This means, I think, through operating only on the lower or fleshly side of our nature. Law—the principle of restraint sanctioned by penalty, for this is

what the apostle would appear to intend in speaking of the law in this passage—is destitute of power to condemn sin in the high moral sense of that expression just pointed out, because it operates, and from its nature can operate, only on our fears and not on our affections; while it is from a wrong state of our affections that all sinful actions proceed, and in a wrong state of our affections that the very essence of sinfulness lies.

Even in the case of human laws which take cognisance only of outward actions, and not of dispositions of the mind, mere operation upon fear is not sufficient to prevent criminality. Witness the number of criminals that continue to give occupation to our courts of justice. Witness the fact that crime is often committed at the very foot of the gallows. Or go back over the history of our country;—any person reading the history of Great Britain can hardly fail to be struck with the frequency with which prosecutions for treason took place long ago, and that notwithstanding the frightful punishment annexed by the law to this high offence. Now-a-days, on the other hand, they are extremely rare. And why? Where is the explanation to be looked for? It is not to be looked for in the law; it lies in the fact that we have now the happiness to live under more strictly constitutional government, and with a monarch over us to whom we are all affectionately attached. In consequence, the treasonable disposition has disappeared. It has been eradicated, not by

law, but by the growth of liberty. Or again, at a period not very long gone by, our criminal code was much more severe than it is at present. Many offences which are now visited with a comparatively slight degree of punishment, were then treated as capital crimes. Those who endeavoured to mitigate the severity of the laws were continually told it would be dangerous; 'you will embolden the criminal, you will imperil the community.' It has not, however, proved so. On the contrary, some at least of the offences which are now more leniently dealt with have become less frequent than they formerly were.

I am quite aware that the analogy between human governments and the Divine government must not be pushed too far. It is not a perfect analogy. In the present instance, for example, it is not meant to insinuate that the punishment annexed to sin by the Divine law was ever too severe. Nor is it intended, by anything that has been said, to convey so false an idea as that the Gospel announces any relaxation of that punishment in favour of the impenitent and unbelieving. The Gospel is a method of saving the penitent and the believing through the inworking of righteousness in them; and not a relaxation of the law in favour of unrighteousness. Still, though the analogy between human governments and the Divine government is not perfect, it is the same human nature with which both have to deal; and the facts that have been mentioned are obviously good for the

only purpose for which they have been adduced, namely, to show that, even as regards outward acts of transgression, mere operation of fear is not sufficient to prevent these. Nay, in the case of the Divine government, it is perhaps even less sufficient than in the case of human governments. Although the punishment annexed to sin by the Divine law is infinitely more terrible than any punishment inflicted by human laws, it is distant—at least that part of it which is chiefly to be considered in this argument is distant;—nor have we ever actually witnessed the infliction of it upon any one; we have never seen the flames of perdition, as we have seen the instruments of human justice; there is room, therefore, for scepticism as to the whole subject of future retribution; and there is room also, even where that scepticism does not exist, for the baneful influence of the temptation to which Solomon alludes, “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.”

As a matter of fact and experience, I may be wrong, but I believe it is comparatively very seldom indeed that men are restrained from sin by the fear of hell. This is not the motive that most generally rises up, when any motive rises up at all, to keep them back from it. There will be a congregation of people, who would deem it very great heresy were any doubt to be cast on the reality or the eternity of future punishment; and yet, when tempted into sin,

there will be very few among them who would not think far more of some present ill consequence, than of everlasting ruin, as a motive for not yielding to the temptation. Such among them as are true Christians will certainly find their safeguard far more in love than in fear; it is not the smoke of the pit, but the blood of redemption, that will keep them back from the accursed thing. The thought that comes up the readiest, and as a sin-subduing thought the most powerfully, to the Christian mind, is not that of the lake that burneth with fire for the destruction of the wicked, but of the heart that bled for man's salvation, and that ever bleedeth afresh over human sinfulness and human misery.

The truth as to this whole matter is, that if you leave the Gospel—the power of love—out of the question, and if you take into view only the law—the power of rule and restraint—instead of the law condemning sin in the practical judgment of the sinner, you will find it is sin that condemns the law. Take up a legal standing-ground—a standing-ground of works; leave the Gospel, the revelation of forgiving and sanctifying love, out of sight; do not rest your confidence on the atonement of Jesus; and what then? Well, brethren, no one likes to believe that he is doomed to perdition; very few do believe it; probably no one believes it habitually, however some may believe it for a time in a fit of remorse; to believe it habitually were enough to drive one mad. But if you do not believe it, how do you avoid the belief? how is it

found, as a matter of experience, that men avoid this belief? The answer is,—They condemn the law. It is too severe a law, too severe in its penalties; it never can be, that God will inflict them. This is one way in which men condemn the law. Another way is,—it is too strict a law; it demands too much; it sets up too high a standard;—in short, they bring it down to the level of their own lives. Brethren, you cannot, you dare not, open your eyes fully to the length and breadth of the law, except in the light of the Gospel; you cannot read the ten commandments, with full acknowledgment of all the depth of their meaning, and of all the solemnity of their sanctions, except in the light of the Cross. It is when I behold in Christ how the law has been vindicated without involving my condemnation; it is when I see in Him that there exists in God a forgiving love, of which I can take hold for the pardon of my past transgressions, and a sanctifying love, of which I can also take hold for help upwards to a better mind and a better life; it is then, and then only, I am in a position fully to confess to myself how far the law is above me, and how holy and just it is, as well in what it threatens, as in what it commands.

But this whole argument derives additional and perfectly conclusive force from the further consideration, that the law of God takes cognisance of dispositions of the mind, as well as of actual deeds. If this be kept in view, it will be evident that, owing to the very nature of the case, sin cannot be con-

demned in the sense we have been led to attach to this expression—cannot be practically condemned in the estimation of the sinner—cannot be condemned so as to be cured, by any operation on the principle of fear. The thing is impossible. Human laws have to do with outward actions alone. If I am guiltless of any act of rebellion, no matter how I may have the heart of a rebel, the law as to rebellion has nothing to say to me. But, however, (if that were possible,) I might be guiltless of actual sin, if I have the heart of a rebel against God, the law of God has everything to say to me. Now, fear may restrain from overt criminality, but it cannot change the heart; and if it cannot change the heart, then, as the very essence of sin is wrong-heartedness towards God, it cannot cure sin. What is the case even in human governments? How different the hearty loyalty which pervades all classes in our favoured land, from that mere absence of any public utterance of discontent which is secured under certain continental despotisms by the strong arm of the law—discontent which only becomes the deeper because it is thus concealed, as the flames grow fierce when the furnace door is shut. A great part of the seventh chapter of this Epistle is just an illustration of the same thing as prevailing in the mind of the sinner. The Apostle tells us there, how, as long as he stood upon a legal ground, as long as it was the power of restraint, the law principle,—and not the power of love, the Gospel principle,—that operated within him, his thoughts of the law only

stirred him up to greater rebelliousness of spirit. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And it must always be so. The rebellious spirit, wherever it exists, will only be aggravated and made more fierce by the consciousness of restraint. It can be cured in no other way than by the gentle operation of love. And thus it is that God, of His great mercy, seeks to cure it in us all by the Gospel of His Son. That Gospel is just a manifestation of God's character fitted to draw us out of the condition into which we have fallen. However the law might have been sufficient to guide the innocent, it cannot cure the rebellion of the heart. We have the power that is adapted to this high end in the manifestation of love, gently drawing us back out of the rebellious into the loving mind.

Let me put the same thing another way. The way it has been put just now is this :—What is sin? Sin consists essentially in a rebellious spirit; the law therefore cannot cure sin, because you cannot cure a rebellious spirit, however you may restrain from rebellious actions, by operation upon fear. But let me put it another way. Let me ask this time, not what is sin? but what is righteousness? Righteousness essentially consists in a loving spirit on the part of His children towards the Father of all. Righteousness is just the harmony with God of a heart that loves God. That is the right spirit, or the righteous

spirit. Now, we cannot be threatened into love ; we cannot be forced into it. We must be drawn ; and the Gospel is the attractive power. What kind of hearts must we have if we do not feel that power ! Can we really believe that the Almighty sent forth His only-begotten Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to endure for our redemption the sufferings of Calvary, without feeling the rebellious spirit condemned in us, and the righteous spirit, the spirit of reconciliation, called into being ?

Brethren, let us thank God that He did not rest satisfied with the legal method of condemning sin. It might have been condemned most signally in the view of the universe by our destruction. He might have shown His hatred against it, by inflicting upon us, in all its severity, the vengeance of the law. But glory to His name that He remembered mercy, that, in His wisdom, He devised another method of condemning our iniquities, even that Gospel method, which involves the cure of sinfulness and the salvation of the sinner !

It was indeed required that sin should be condemned in the view of the universe. The law must be upheld ; its majesty must be vindicated. Holding in reverence the Divine sovereignty, it would seem to us impossible to conceive of any method of salvation which should not proceed on some condemnation of sin in the view of the universe, some condemnation of it that should stamp it in the view of all created intelligence with the deep brand of the Divine abhor-

rence. It is here one seems to see, so far as one can humbly look into these mysteries, the necessity for some such work as that of our Redeemer. But though one might think,—nay, seems obliged to think,—that some provision for the vindication of the law must needs have place in any scheme for the salvation of transgressors, oh! who could have imagined such a wonderful provision as has actually been made? In the sufferings that were laid upon the very Son of the Highest, made flesh to bear them, what a proof to all intelligent creation, infinitely more impressive than could have been afforded by the destruction of our whole race, that there must be no tampering with the statutes of the Supreme Ruler!

And here we are brought again to this,—for this is the thing that comes back and back again to us in all meditation upon such a theme, shall not we be induced by this wonderful redemption to condemn in ourselves the sins which brought these sufferings on the head of Jesus? It was “for sin,” we read in the text, that they were laid upon Him. Whatever our views as to the theory of the atonement may be,—and that is a deep subject, and there is room for variety of opinion upon it,—it was “for sin” that Christ endured the griefs and trials of His life, and finally that ignominious death on the accursed tree. But “for sin,” He would never have left the glory which He had with the Father before all worlds; He would never have wandered on the earth homeless and despised, a man of sorrow; the agony in the

garden would never have pierced His soul; He would never have been stung with the thorns, and buffeted, and spit upon, and scourged, and crucified. On any view you may take as to the exact mode in which His sufferings and our forgiveness are connected, these sufferings were "for sin," were endured because of sin, but for sin would not have been endured.

And if they were for sin, shall not that thought constrain us to condemn in ourselves what entailed these sorrows on our Saviour; ay, and what grieves His heart even now? How touching those words of Scripture about the crucifying of Christ afresh! Shall we incur that guilt? Shall we incur that shame? Professing Christians as we are, shall we, by a hypocritical profession, array Him again in the robes of mockery? Shall we, by continuing in the ways of iniquity, heap new insults on His head? Shall we pierce His bosom with fresh wounds?

Nay, O our Saviour! we cannot, we shall not grieve Thee thus. Thou hast made our sins unutterably odious in our own eyes; henceforth, by Thy help, we shall be guilty of them no more.

PARABLE OF THE POTTER.

(FEBRUARY 21, 1864.)

“The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house; and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house; and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.”—JEREMIAH xviii. 1–10.

THIS is an important passage. Let us try to understand it, and to learn some of the lessons it is fitted to teach. The potter’s power over the clay, as we all know, is one of the arguments most constantly used by the adherents of a certain school of religious thought, to silence all questionings respecting the righteousness of God in choosing some to eternal life, and passing by others. They think they are taught by St Paul to use this argu-

ment for this purpose; for does he not ask, in the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

There can be no doubt that, in using this argument, the Apostle had in his mind what is written by the prophet in the chapter before us. The 9th chapter to the Romans is full of Old Testament allusions. It is, in fact, an argument with the Jews on Jewish grounds, to show that, in rejecting them for a season until their obstinacy should be subdued, and they should become obedient to the faith, God was not acting inconsistently with His promises; for the promise had never been to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but to a chosen seed alone;—first to Isaac, passing by Ishmael; and then to Jacob, passing by Esau;—to a chosen seed, who are called the children of the promise, and whom, it is evident from many passages in his writings, the Apostle regarded as a type of the spiritual-minded, who, in his view, were the true children of Abraham. Thus, reasoning with Jews upon Jewish grounds, he is naturally led to allude frequently to the Old Testament throughout the chapter, and this, if anything were needed beyond the manifest similarity between his language and that of the prophet, makes it quite clear that the passage now before us was in his mind. If we look at this passage, therefore, it may help us to understand his saying; and that saying is

a most important one, bearing as it does on some of the most vital questions which can occupy thought.

What the prophet tells us is, that by direction of the Lord, he went down to the house of a potter, and found him working a work on the wheels. This work was marred, or spoiled, in the hands of the potter; and then he destroyed it, and made the clay over again into another vessel; all which, the prophet was told, might be taken as a type of the way in which the Lord would deal, and had a right to deal, with the house of Israel. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."

Now, my friends, if this means, as it is sometimes apparently understood to mean, that we are not warranted to put questions as to the righteousness of God's dealings, the first thing I have to say is that, in that case, it conveys to us a very different lesson from what we find in many other passages of Scripture. Instead of checking as presumptuous and vain the natural questionings of the thoughtful mind with respect to the dealings of the Almighty, these passages at once attest the majesty of that inward tribunal which the Lord has established in the soul, and encourage us to inquire into and judge of the Lord's ways; only so long, however, as we do this with the reverence and humility which ought to be impressed upon us by the consideration that the ways of the Lord lead from eternity and into eternity,

and have so many and such far-reaching connexions, that we may need sometimes to look long ere we can see them all. Reverence and humility are what we ought to be taught by the remembrance that God is infinite, and we finite,—not, as is sometimes taught, the duty of abrogating, not only our reason, but our moral judgment,—that is to say, of dethroning God's vicegerent out of reverence for God. What is required of us by the general tone of Scripture is not a blind submission to overpowering might, but intelligent compliance with a holy and righteous will. This is the high idea which Scripture presents of what constitutes our true goodness. And if this be required, then, doubtless also—nay, of necessity—we must be permitted to exercise that sense which has been given us to discern between good and evil, in looking thoughtfully and inquiringly, though always reverently, at the manifestations of the will of the Most High which He has set before us; and that surely in a matter of so great importance to us as are His proceedings in reference to our eternal salvation.

Then again, are we not to hold that righteousness, and truth, and justice, and mercy, as they exist in the Divine nature, are attributes the same in kind with, though infinitely greater in degree than, those attributes in our own nature which are known by the same names? If this be not so, then the words have no meaning which teach us that man was created in the image of God,—a truth which lies at the foundation of religion; nor yet the words which set it before

us as the end of our manifold advantages, that, being again made partakers of the Divine nature, we shall be perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God for ever. Such would be the consequences if it be not the case that righteousness, and truth, and mercy, and justice are of the same nature in God and in us. On the other hand, if it be the case, we perceive at once how there is a competence in the human conscience, so long as it proceeds in the reverent and cautious way already described,—how there is a duty incumbent upon it,—to consider the equity of the ways of the Lord.

I say, then, first, that if it is meant by the parable of the potter in the text to silence inquiry as to the righteousness of the Lord's dealings in the distribution of good and evil, then Jeremiah's teaching was something very different from that of the other prophets of the Old Testament. But now, secondly, if we look at the text with a little more care, we shall see that in reality it teaches nothing of the kind.

What was it that Jeremiah saw? A potter making a vessel, and the vessel was marred in the potter's hand; and then he made it again another vessel,—that is, of course, he broke it down out of its first marred or spoiled shape, and made it again into another and a better shape. This is what Jeremiah saw. And what did the Lord claim under this similitude? Not the right of making it, if He pleased, a marred or useless vessel. That was not the point in question. But a right, when the vessel

became marred in His hands, of kneading it out of the unserviceable shape, and forming it into a new shape. It does not appear how the vessel was marred. We cannot tell how sin came into the world. The origin of evil is the darkest of mysteries, and a mystery which has not been, and probably cannot be, revealed to the human understanding. The text does not touch that mystery at all. But what it does say is this, that as the potter changed the marred vessel into another vessel, so God has the right of changing His dealings with nations and individuals, and moulding them when unserviceable into new shapes. We have not then here an assertion of sovereignty, made for the purpose of crushing under the iron heel of despotic right all questions as to God's distribution among His creatures of good and evil. But we have, what is very different indeed, an assertion of the Divine right, implying also an inclination of the Divine will, to apply a new discipline in new circumstances; to mould again unserviceable vessels so as to make them fit for the Master's use. It was righteousness and mercy, therefore, and not at all mere hard, stern, sovereign will, which the parable of the potter was intended to illustrate.

If you have the least doubt as to this interpretation, you have only to read again the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, and that doubt will be immediately dispelled. In these verses you have the Lord's own interpretation of the parable and application of it.

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.” What could be more distinct and explicit than this? The Lord declares as plainly as words can declare, that He desired to claim, under the type of the potter, not the right of making useless and unprofitable vessels, but the right of remoulding the clay in justice and in wisdom,—the right of changing His dealings with the children of Israel.

You may say, But what was the good of this claim? Where was the necessity for making it? Would any one be disposed to question the right of the Lord to change His dealings? The answer is,—This was the very thing the Jews were disposed to do, and it was one of the things which puffed them up with spiritual pride, and made them on many occasions such obstinate and supercilious transgressors. Were they not the children of the promise? Had not the Lord made a covenant with their fathers? Had He not sworn with an oath that He would be their God, and they should be His people? They were therefore a chosen people, and had a sure

and indefeasible title to the blessings of the covenant. This was an idea very deeply fixed in the Jewish mind, and it was this idea which the parable of the potter was intended to combat. It was intended to arouse the Jewish Church and people out of their false and carnal security, by assuring them that the Lord's favour and privileges would continue with them only so long as that favour and these privileges were improved, otherwise a new way of dealing would be taken; their lineage, according to the flesh, would not prevent them from being subjected to those Divine chastisements which they would deserve in justice, but which, at the same time, would be designed and arranged in mercy to bring them back through repentance to all, and more than all, the blessings they had lost. Thus, then, taking into consideration the state of mind in which the Jews were, the parable conveyed a most necessary and salutary lesson, as it does in like manner to all who build themselves up in carnal pride and security upon any outward ground or arbitrary choice. It is not the right of arbitrary choice which the text in any sense claims for the Almighty, but rather, when properly looked at, it goes in quite the opposite direction; and, whereas the Jews were trusting in God's election of and covenant with their fathers, it tells them that all such trust was in vain, independently of dutiful obedience to the Divine will.

The very same confidence in the flesh which the Jews displayed in Jeremiah's time, they exhibited in

even greater measure in the days of the Apostle Paul. He too, accordingly, had to struggle against it, and in doing so, in the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he makes use, among others, of Jeremiah's weapon, "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" In his time, as in that of the prophet, his countrymen imagined they were for ever secured in their position as the chosen people of God by the covenant with Abraham; and therefore all that the Apostle taught about the reception of the Gentiles within the pale of Messiah's kingdom, and the possible, nay, not improbable, rejection of the Jews themselves, was not only felt by them as injurious to the dignity they had been accustomed to claim, but seemed at variance with the truth and faithfulness of God. We must bear in mind, in order to understand them with any degree of clearness, that the argument of the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans is directed against this idea. The 9th chapter, in particular, is in some respects an extremely difficult one, and it has acquired great importance in the Church from being considered the chapter above all others which sets forth a strict predestinarianism, and a predestinarianism which silences all questions as to the Divine righteousness in choosing some and passing by others, by a simple appeal to the Divine sovereignty. Now, my friends, when the question about the clay and the potter is urged as putting an effectual end to all other questions on this subject, I confess I

have often felt it a great difficulty. Clay is one thing, but a human soul is another; and though a potter might have power to make a piece of clay into any shape, it hardly seems to follow that holiness and love could deal in the same arbitrary way with a soul that can think and feel, that is capable of everlasting happiness or misery. These capabilities make a vast difference between the moulding of souls, so to speak, and the moulding of clay by the potter, or of marble by the sculptor. Though I do not get, what probably even the Scriptures could not have furnished to the finite comprehension of man, an explanation of the origin of evil, yet I get some help at least out of the difficulty to which I have just alluded, when I look to the source from which the Apostle took his argument, when I refer to the words of the prophet to which his brief allusion was doubtless intended to direct his readers' minds, and when I find there that the prophet was fighting against the very same error which engaged the Apostle also, and that the real meaning of the parable which the Lord set before him, was not to assert anything like despotic authority, but to say that the Lord would change His dealings, and had a right to change His dealings, according as such privileges as had been granted were improved or abused.

I have not time just now to go over the whole of the 9th chapter to the Romans, and I do not mean to say that if I had, I should be able to remove all difficulty from a passage which has been felt by men

of every shade of opinion an extremely hard one. But in reading it, and in thinking upon it, I have got some help from the following considerations,—namely,

First, That the subject of the chapter is the righteousness of God in rejecting the Jews *as a nation*, not as individuals.—Secondly, That the question, therefore, is of national privilege, and not of individual salvation.—Thirdly, That the Jews, though chosen first in Abraham from among the nations, then in Isaac from among the children of Abraham, then in Jacob from among the children of Isaac, were not so chosen but that individuals among them might be lost, and even the whole nation might be cast out; all which goes to show that the election of God, spoken of in the sense in which, as a Jew, the Apostle must have been accustomed to use it, was national and not individual.—Fourthly, That when I turn to the passage cited by St Paul from the prophet Jeremiah, I find it to have the meaning explained in the present sermon.—Fifthly, That when I look to the 22d verse, and find allusions to God's enduring vessels of wrath with much long-suffering, I see traces of the same idea of a reconstruction of what had been marred, which I find also in the prophet.—And lastly, I am helped chiefly of all when I take a conjunct view of the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters together, all which belong to the same argument, and when I see how the Apostle passes on from the rejection of Israel in the 9th chapter to the restoration which he predicts in the

11th, and how he finds the grandest vindication of the Divine faithfulness in that ingathering which would take place when the chastisements of the Lord had awakened in them that new and more spiritual life, the germs of which, we learn from the 10th chapter, he already saw with the eye of his large charity, underneath the very evils he most strongly denounced, in what, though neither according to knowledge nor love, was yet as he describes it, a “zeal of God.”

These considerations I find to be helps in reading the chapter to which I have referred, and the good which they do me I take to be this. They help me to say that the Scriptures have left literally *all* questions relative to the predestination of individuals to everlasting life untouched, and still in the deep darkness in which all problems are involved that run up so immediately into the origin of evil: they help me to say that all such questions belong to philosophy, and not to revelation: and they help me to preach, as far more certainly true than any speculative view whatever, that blessed Gospel which declares on the Divine side that the Lord hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that all should come to repentance, and which therefore directs to all men, without reservation of any sort, the call and exhortation, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

Finally then, my brethren, may I not remark that there is another application of the parable of the potter which might be made to us all. We are all, in a certain degree, marred vessels, not serving the

use we were designed for, at least not serving it fully, —marred by sin, and rendered more or less ungraceful and unprofitable. And what is our position as Christians, enjoying the benefit of God's Word and God's ordinances? What is our position as the subjects too of God's providential discipline from day to day? Does not this parable reply? God, in His mercy, is working a new work upon the wheels: He is seeking to remake the marred vessel. All that convinces us of sin and weakness, all that breaks our pride and self-conceit, all that humbles us before God, and makes us more alive to our dependence upon Him,—all this is just the grinding down of the vessel that has been spoiled. And all that forms us into goodness, all that develops in us any beauty or nobleness of character, all that shapes us into the likeness of our blessed Redeemer and confirms us therein,—all this is just our remaking by the mercy of God. We are now, as it were, upon the potter's wheel: it is solemn to think that we have the awful power of rendering ourselves marred vessels; but it is joyful and encouraging to know that the Lord is desiring to shape us, and that if therefore we will only yield to Him, we shall be shaped, by His power and skill, into vessels of grace fit for the heavenly sanctuary.

THE VALUE OF THE SIMPLE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

(MARCH 13, 1864.)

“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.”—
1 CORINTHIANS ii. 6.

DISPUTATIONS and schismatical tendencies had sprung up in the Corinthian Church; and, as against these, the Apostle is reminding the Corinthians in this chapter of the simplicity of the Gospel, as he had preached it among them at the first. He had abstained from entering into disputations of any sort; he had told the simple story of the works and words, and death and resurrection of our adorable Lord. He had not appealed to human wisdom, but he had preached the Gospel in its breadth and simplicity, trusting that it would prove itself, as it did prove itself, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

You can quite imagine an educated Corinthian to have replied in language like this: ‘Yes, it is exactly as we thought; this form of religion taught by Paul is just one of those superstitions to which the vulgar are so much inclined; in fact, he himself confesses it; he does not lay claim to wisdom and philosophy; he repudiates wisdom and philosophy—they are nothing to him; nay, worse than

nothing, positive hindrances; we have here only the old story often repeated in the history of religion,—the ignorant and fanatical imagine they have got a light better and purer than the God-given reason of man, and so they are led into follies by their pride and presumption.’

In the text, St Paul, as it were, anticipates remarks of this sort. He virtually says,—‘No, it is not so; what we speak is not the folly you take it for, nor do we make any such confession. We say, indeed, that it is not the wisdom of this world; we have not learned it in the schools; it is not a product of human philosophy; we have got it from a higher source; we have obtained it from the Father of lights; and we tell what we know in the simplest, plainest words:—nevertheless, it is the deepest wisdom after all; it goes home as wisdom to them that are perfect—a wisdom far better than man’s wisdom, far higher and purer, and more instructive to the soul—a wisdom which men may count foolishness, but which, if it be foolishness, is that foolishness of God which is wiser than men, and which men may count weakness and drivelling, but which, if it be weakness, is that weakness of God which is stronger than men.’

One sentence, first, as to the meaning of the term “perfect,” in our text.

Some think there is an allusion in it to the heathen mysteries. These mysteries were religious observances of a secret kind, open only to the initiated. The word that in the text is translated “perfect,”

is said to be the same word which, in speaking of the heathen mysteries, was sometimes used to denote the initiated; and as these mysteries were things with which the Corinthians were familiar, it is thought that the Apostle may have had them in his mind,—as if he had intended to say, ‘Our doctrine, which appears foolishness to the outside world, and which does not reveal its full excellence even to those who are only beginners in the faith, has depths in it which are disclosed to more advanced believers; just as, in the mysteries with which you yourselves are familiar, there are things which are kept hidden from the multitude, and disclosed only to those who have gone through the rites of initiation.’

Such is one way in which the word in question is sometimes explained. And substantially, no doubt, this explanation conveys the right idea; for, though I can find very little authority for supposing that there is any reference to the mysteries, it is quite clear that the Apostle does mean by the “perfect,” the more advanced members of the Christian community, as contrasted with those whom he designates in the context “babes in Christ.” These more advanced members were the persons to whom he spoke “wisdom.”

And now what was this “wisdom?” Certainly we are not to think that the Apostle had two doctrines,—an exoteric and an esoteric,—one for those without, and another for those within the Church, or one for beginners and another for the more thoroughly initiated. Such is not the meaning. The meaning is,

that the same Gospel which was preached to all acquired a new significancy as men advanced in Christian culture and godly living,—revealed new depths of Divine knowledge and grace,—approved itself ever more and more as the wisdom of God which maketh wise unto salvation. It was not that he had a different message to deliver to different classes of men, or to the same class of men in different stages of mental or moral development. There was one message for all; one declaration for all of a common Father of all, out of whom there is no permanent happiness or peace for any human soul,—one common Father, against whom all had sinned, but who had mercy upon all, and had sent forth Jesus Christ our Lord to seek to save them. There was just this one message for high and low, for rich and poor, for learned and unlearned; but as men received it, and came under its influence, they would come to understand,—they *did* come to understand,—more and more the riches of Divine wisdom there was in it;—the insight it gave into the secrets of human nature; the wonderful knowledge it implied of man's real wants, and its wonderful adaptation to supply them. Thus the message which was one for all, ever revealed itself increasingly to men, according as, through its powerful inworking, it delivered them more and more from prejudice and perversity, and developed in them more and more of the Divine life, so that they had ears which could hear and eyes which could see.

I do not say, indeed, that this is all the meaning of

the text. Though Christianity has not two messages, but only one message,—and though this message in its highest and most important form is broad and simple, and so plain that he who runs may read,—yet, nevertheless, it touches upon questions both profound and difficult, and fitted to engage the most anxious, and reverent, and patient consideration even of the highest minds. A Christian teacher must endeavour, therefore, to speak as men can hear what he has to say; and this was done by the Apostle. There cannot be a doubt that, in one point of view, the wisdom he speaks of in the text was something he had not yet fully laid before the Corinthians; for he tells us distinctly, in the beginning of the third chapter, that he had hitherto fed them with milk, and not with meat; for, he goes on, “ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”

If, then, you repeat the question, what was the wisdom which St Paul preached?—he began, as he tells, with the plain, grand, simple story of Christ and Him crucified; but then afterwards, as men received this and came under its power, he gradually led them forward, for instance, into such doctrine regarding the justification of sinners by faith, in contradistinction from works, as we find in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and concerning the person and offices of Christ, as we find in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians;—in short, into that world of thought, all bearing on and illustrating the Fatherly love of God in Christ, and the dealings of

God with the spiritual mind, into which his various letters have led the Church, and which is so wide and rich that, after the study of 1800 years, we have not only not exhausted, but hardly even entered upon its manifold treasures both of knowledge and of wisdom—of food for the intellect, and food for the heart.

All this is true; but the other point is more important. In Christian doctrine, as in all other things, if people are to be spoken to with any degree of advantage, they must be spoken to as they can bear it,—or, in other words, as they are prepared to understand and receive what is said to them; and, for this reason,—though always within the limits of the one grand message which is the same for all,—there are different styles, and even to a certain extent different subjects of preaching and teaching, and generally of religious thought, which are suitable to different classes and different degrees of mental and moral culture. All this, I say, is true. But it is equally true, and of far greater consequence to be observed, that one of the best results of culture,—the culture of thought or the culture of experience,—is just that men should see and appreciate more the depth of wisdom which there is in the simplest elements of our Holy Faith. One of the distinguishing qualities in those who are most advanced in the knowledge of Christianity is just that they discern and realise and relish the value and excellence of its most rudimentary truths; as, for example, that we are all

the children of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, and that He has a purpose of grace towards us, which He is ever seeking to carry out under, and by means of, all His dispensations.

It does not follow that, because a thing is simple, we may conclude that it has been easily reached, or that it is deficient in depth and comprehensiveness. The very contrary is rather the case. The last and greatest results of science, its widest inductions and most comprehensive generalisations, are ever to appearance the most simple. Take, for instance, the science of astronomy. For many ages, when that science was but half understood, its history is full of the most complicated and difficult theories and conjectures, intended to explain and account for the various motions of the heavenly bodies; we hear of spheres within spheres, of cycles and epicycles, and many other ideas equally intricate and equally unsatisfactory. How different the grand simple law to which at length Newton was enabled to come—a law capable of being expressed in the simplest terms, but which yet may be followed out by a profound mathematics through the whole field of the universe, and shown to be the law that guides the movements of the distant stars. Even so in religion. For the last 1800 years the Church has been engaged in innumerable discussions more or less important, and leading to results more or less satisfactory, respecting the facts and laws of the kingdom of grace. In the apostolic age itself these discussions began; and

then, and ever since, men have been seeking to theorise religion, sometimes in a legitimate way with clarity, candour, and reverence; sometimes in a foolish way with wrath and anger, and evil-speaking and narrowness of mind, as if human judgments were the measure of Divine truth, and the free life of religion could be expressed for all men within the limits of a formula. In our own age these discussions continue, and are carried on in the same diversity of spirit. If there is anything among us, however, which indicates a real progress, it is, I think, this,—that we are coming to value a little more the simple elements of the faith; that it is gradually dawning upon us that the Gospel is a wider and more liberal thing than the ideas of the 16th or 17th century, or of any other epoch of creed-making that can be named; that there are truths more comprehensive than those which the specialties of particular times called into a prominence which for these times was good and natural, but which cannot continue to attach to them throughout all the progress of the ages, any more than one can continue, as he travels along a road, to see the same mountain or castle always of one and the same apparent size. There may be much scepticism abroad, much infidelity, avowed and covert; a very uncertain sound may be heard sometimes from within the Church itself, as to what we have been accustomed to consider the very foundations of the Christian faith; but in the midst of all the conflict of opinion, I think we

have reason to thank God for a certain degree of advancement; and the evidence of it is to be seen just in the greater love which the most thoughtful and influential minds of the time are showing for the broader and more simple truths of the Gospel, such as God's Fatherhood, and Christ's Headship, and the Spirit's indwelling, and the mercy that is going forth towards all, and ever seeking in a thousand ways to work upon, and kindle into brightness, the light that lighteth every man, so that thereby he may be guided to the land of light and peace.

I do not mean to say that the discussions of the past were useless. No man could venture to say so, without betraying an overweening conceit as to his own times in which most probably there would be mingled some measure of that personal vanity which is the greatest hindrance to true knowledge; and no man would think of saying so, who believes in an overruling Providence, who presides over all the centuries. On the contrary, these discussions were useful in their own day, as expressions of the religious thought, and therefore so far of the religious life, of the time; they have been useful to subsequent generations, sometimes as helping towards a better understanding of the points to which they referred,—sometimes as proving the very impossibility of profitable or satisfactory theorising. But, granting all this, it is one of the best things in the present stirring of religious thought, that the best and weightiest thinkers are coming back to the elements more; are striving

less to carry the torch into regions which cannot be explored; and are more content to rest in that sunshine of God, which He has caused to beam out brightly on that grand and blessed truth, that in Christ, the second Adam, He knows and loves us all.

And, truly, they are no “weak and beggarly elements,” these first elements of the Christian faith, to which I think it matter of congratulation that we are thus coming back. God’s Fatherhood; Christ’s Headship,—not of the Church merely, in the narrow sense of the words too often put upon His Headship, but that much grander thing, Christ’s Headship, to use the words of an apostle, over all things to the Church;—God’s Fatherhood; Christ’s Headship; Christ’s indwelling Spirit, whereby we are rendered, not formally only, but really and truly, members of His body;—these grand broad Christian truths: and then the equally grand and broad Christian morality,—the law of love, the law of self-sacrifice, the law on which *He* lived, who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister;—these are no “weak and beggarly elements;” there could be nothing grander or more sublime. They are simple principles; but just as a profound mathematics can show in the simple principle of gravitation that which regulates the motions of the spheres, so I believe that profound thought will ever go on, showing more and more that these simple principles are the deepest laws of the moral world; the most far-reaching in their influence; the most blessed in their results, when men recognise

them, and accommodate to them their feelings and lives; the most sure to bring down punishment on those who seek to disobey. Yes; and, brethren, we are far from having seen and realised their grandeur and their excellence, as it were well for us to do. The Fatherhood of God, and the Headship of Christ, and the holy love manifested on the cross, and the free gift of the Spirit,—what reservations we have sought to put on each and all of these ideas,—under what narrow conditions of our own invention we have been willing to receive them! and hence what standing back from God, when we ought to have been rushing, as it were, into our Father's bosom! what standing back from one another, when we ought to have been embracing one another in love; what anger and evil speaking, when our voices should have blended in a common hallelujah! It will take a long time yet ere we get into the depths of these simple ideas, and get to that perfection of individual and social culture, when we shall see the deepest wisdom in perfect trust and perfect love.

In speaking thus strongly of the value of the simple elements of Christianity, it must not be supposed that anything is implied depreciatory of thought upon the subject. I believe that the first truths you teach a child, are the best truths for an old man to die upon. If you teach a child among its first lessons to look up to Almighty God, and say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," there is no better last word to come from dying lips than that which came from the

very lips of Jesus, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." But it does not follow that to a child and to an old man the same words mean the same thing, or come home with the same force and reality. I fully believe that, as a man advances in mental and spiritual culture, he comes to delight more in the simplicities of the Gospel; but then, after he has got back to these, perhaps through painful struggles and doubts, perhaps through many temptations of the world, perhaps through a discipline of outward sorrow, they are something far more to him than they were long ago. The shore where the shipwrecked seaman finds a safe and hospitable shelter, is something more to him henceforward than the shore which was merely marked in his chart or described in his book of geography. The friend on whom one has thrown one's self in trouble, and not been disappointed, is something more to him henceforward than the friend in whom he was merely told that he might trust. It is thus that experience gives reality to conviction, and that what one knows after thought and trial is so much increased in preciousness. It is he who has been tossed in the storm, whether of doubt, of temptation, or of sorrow, and who has found it necessary to let down the anchor of his faith far below the surface-waters of controversy and opinion to the solid ground of the deep Divine love—it is he who knows best how precious it is to have this anchorage of the soul sure and steadfast.

Nothing, then, that has been said can fairly be

considered as depreciatory of thought and inquiry and general Christian culture. What the subject really teaches in a practical point of view is that, since the last and highest result of thought and life is to give body to the simplest and broadest truths of our religion, we should try to think and live with simplicity and single-mindedness. I am sure it is a good thing for us to know that what we all most need as religious persons, is a deeper hold of that which is most simple in our holy faith; for, if we know this, while there is nothing in the knowledge to make us undervalue that thought and experience which go to reveal the fulness that there is in simple Gospel truth, there is much to make us unwilling to waste our time on mere word battles, and to induce us to keep our minds directed to the great subjects it is truly important to understand.

There is a way of speaking one sometime hears, as if a simple faith meant nearly the same thing as an ignorant faith, and there were danger to our holding the truth in simplicity, from allowing ourselves any latitude of speculation or reflection. There may be danger to our holding certain forms of truth, or so-called truth, but I cannot admit that, so long as we maintain reverence and earnestness, there can be any real danger to the simplicity of the Gospel. No, my friends; but the more we think, and the more we have experience of life, we shall love that simplicity more; for there is nothing like culture and experience

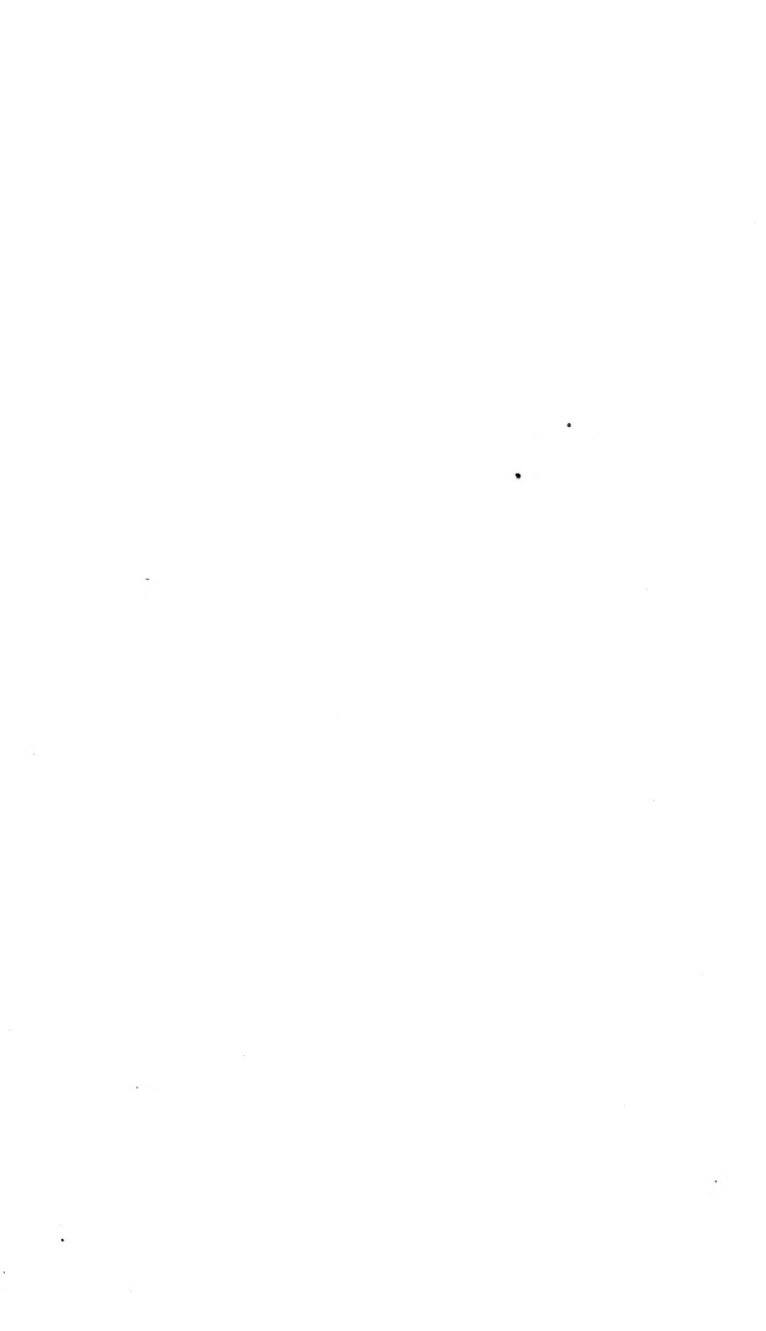
to make one love and admire the simple, and see its greatness and beauty.

It may be true, in many instances, that one's period of warmest feeling in regard to Divine truth, is that when he is first brought under its influence; especially in cases of sudden conversion, or when one is brought under its influence as the result of some crisis in his history, this may be true. When the blessed Gospel first comes home to him, he may see its grandeur and blessedness with a flood of emotion, which gradually subsides, and never rises again to the same height. But it does not follow on this account that there is no progress. It is a law of human nature that vehement emotion cannot long continue; but the river may be swelling in real dimensions even though it has less the character of a torrent; and in the flat country, drawing its tribute as it flows from every field of thought and experience, it may contain, though quietly, a greater and more useful volume of water than when it rushed in foam among the rocks near its fountains. Or, say that one who had always lived in an inland district is brought within view of the sea. The first prospect of the vast blue expanse would excite feelings he might never again experience; but yet, were he to live upon its margin, or sail upon its bosom, and still more, were he to study the laws of its motions, and its influence on climate and commerce, and all its manifold relations to the world of matter and

the world of men, he would come to look upon it, not with less, but with greater admiration as a wonderful work of the Almighty. Perhaps the prodigal son, after he was fairly received and established in his father's house, may hardly again have had the same overpowering sense of his father's love as at that memorable moment when he first saw him coming forth to meet him. Still there would rise up in his heart, as he daily experienced the reality of his father's kindness, a less vivid, but in some respects even deeper emotion of filial regard, ever growing quietly as in the warm atmosphere of home. Even so one who is brought to the Gospel through the influence of a crisis, may have emotions of a peculiar vividness, which cannot always, or perhaps ever, be maintained; but I am sure it would not be a remedy for this to sit down and weep over the dying embers of his first love,—such tears would only quench them still more utterly; I am sure that humble thought and prayer would lead, even at the very time that vehemence of sentiment might be abating, to a real growth in Christianity; I am sure that reading and reflection would give an ever-enlarging conception of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; I am sure that the habit of leaning upon God would give substance to the faith that God may indeed be leant upon; I am sure that an earnest endeavour to live in the Spirit would bring out wonderfully the value of spiritual truth; and I am sure

that, under God, there would be a real progress,—a progress the reality of which we should find out in time of trouble and in the hour of death,—in that apprehension of, and fellowship with, our Father in heaven, which, according to the Scripture, is life eternal.

PART THIRD.



PART THIRD.

THOUGHTS AND EXPOSITIONS.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?”

“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?”

“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”—ISAIAH lxiii. 1-4.

“I HAVE trodden the winepress alone.” This is very often taken to mean that our Saviour endured alone the sufferings that were laid upon Him. But to tread the winepress never means to endure suffering. There is no instance of such a meaning of the phrase. To *be* in the winepress is to endure suffering; but to *tread* the winepress is to inflict it, to vanquish and crush down one's adversaries. We read, for instance, in Lamentations i. 15: “The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in

the midst of me: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress." And so in the Apocalypse, (xiv. 19:) "The angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God."*

The true meaning of the prophet's language, therefore, is that our Saviour by Himself alone overcame His adversaries. If the first five verses of the chapter are read together, no other proof is required that this is the force we must attach to it. "I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury," are words quite inconsistent with any other idea.

It is then Messiah, the Conqueror, who is here set before us. It was Messiah, the Conqueror, whom the prophet saw in imagination coming up from Bozrah with His garments dyed with the blood of His enemies. He had vanquished them alone—without human help, and to Him alone was the glory.

This involves, no doubt, the other truth, namely, that He was alone in His sufferings,—for it was by His sufferings that He overcame. But the leading idea is not that of His sufferings, but that of His victory—His glorious victory, as the Captain of our salvation, over all the principalities and powers of sin.

* See also Rev. xix. 15.

“ Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM IN HIS CROSS.” (1)—

COLOSSIANS ii. 15.

WE read in the Gospel of St Matthew the account of what is commonly called “our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.” As He was drawing nigh to that city, whither He was going to celebrate what He knew would be His last passover, He was met at Bethphage by a great multitude of people, who received Him with acclamations. Some of them spread their garments, and some of them strewed palm branches in His way, and in crowds they went before Him and after Him, shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”

This is what we are accustomed to call “our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem,” and we are so much in the practice of using these words, that I daresay we sometimes have the impression that they are words we have obtained out of the Scriptures. *That* is not the case however. They are not scriptural words at all. You will find at the beginning of each chapter in many editions of the Bible short headings, or notes of the contents of the chapter. I suppose it is from this source we

have obtained the phrase, "Our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem." Certainly it is not to be found, nor anything like it, in the body of the Gospel narratives themselves. The whole four Evangelists have told the story, but not one of them says anything about a triumph. Very probably the disciples who saw the event thought it a triumph at the time. But not one of the Evangelists keeps up that idea. There is not a syllable to any such effect either in St Matthew, or in St Mark, or in St Luke, or in St John.

It is another event altogether in the history of our Lord which the Scriptures speak of as a triumph,—an event which did not appear at the time a triumph at all, but as unlike a triumph as anything could be. We find in the Gospel of St Matthew the account of another procession, very different from the one from Bethphage to Jerusalem to which I have just referred. This time, too, there were multitudes of people to be seen; this time, too, there was shouting to be heard; but this time the shouts were those, not as before of acclamation, but of execration; this time the cry of the multitude was not "Hosanna," but "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him." They were leading Christ to Calvary. No thought in the mind of His disciples then that this was a triumph. It seemed to them disaster and ignominy. They had all forsaken Him and fled. Yet *this* was the procession they came to regard afterwards as, far more truly than the other, a trium-

phal procession. This was the event they came to look back upon as far the more glorious of the two. They came to see that the real triumph lay, not in the fickle applause of the multitude, but in the steady constancy of soul with which, in the prosecution of His great work, the Lord was alike superior to their favour and their frowns. They came to perceive that the true glory of the Conqueror rested upon Him, not when He entered Jerusalem with Hosannas, but when He was led forth from within its walls with the shame of spitting upon His scanty raiment, and the mark of thorns upon His brow, faint and feeble from the effects of the scourge, and all too weak to carry the cross to which He was soon to be nailed. *That* at length was the true shout of victory,—that great cry, “It is finished!” It was in the last ignominious scene of His life—ignominious as men thought it at the time—that the brightest glory of His life is to be looked for. It was then that, “having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross.”

(¹) *εν αυτω*, in it, (Authorised version;) in Himself, (margin, with Wiclif, Rheims, and Bishops' Bible.) I have adopted the former rendering, and understood “it” of the Cross. “In Him” would perhaps be more correct than either. It involves, however, the same idea. Though it makes God the subject of the sentence, and represents Him as triumphing in Christ,

the passage so runs as to connect this triumph very closely with the Cross. Tyndale and Cranmer translate "in His awne persone." The Geneva Bible of 1557 reads, "hath triumphed over them in the same *Crosse.*"

“The glory which Thou hast given* me I have given them.”
—JOHN xvii. 22.

THESE words are from the memorable prayer our Saviour offered up for His disciples the same night in which He was betrayed. He was just about to enter on His Passion. And yet He speaks of the glory which His Father *had given* Him. He may refer by anticipation to the glory with which He was to be crowned after He had tasted of death. He had this glory in such firm title and such sure promise, that He may have spoken of it as already in possession. And perhaps we may assign the same meaning to what He says of giving to His disciples the glory He had received. I *have* given it, He says, to them. He had given it in purpose and intention so fully, that He speaks as if it had been already bestowed in fact.

Such may be the meaning of our Saviour's words. Such, very probably, was their meaning. But was it their whole meaning? The Passion was at hand; —was it only after the Passion that our Lord was exalted to glory? Was it only then that it could be said His Father had given Him glory? Was

* δεδωκας, “gavest,” (Authorised version.) It ought to be “hast given.”

there no glory in the Passion itself? Was there no glory which God the Father was bestowing on His Son when He was making Him His Chief Minister in accomplishing the salvation of men? When it pleased God to lay our iniquity upon Him, was not this to confer a certain glory—nay, the greatest glory; for can there be a greater glory than that of saving the lost—of bringing back God's children to their Father in heaven?

There was then a glory which had already been bestowed on Christ. It shone around Him even in His humiliation. It will never shine more brightly. He will never wear a crown that will be grander than the crown of thorns.

From the same point of view, is there not a glory He has bestowed already on His sincere followers? Must we say it is only in sure anticipation, and not in present possession, that He has given them what He has received of the Father?

The answer is clear. In giving to any man inclination and power to be of use to his brethren;—in putting it into the heart of any man to sacrifice himself for his brethren's good;—in filling any man with that spirit which leads him to spend and be spent for the advancement of the kingdom of God;—Christ is giving him a share of His own glory.

He gave it to St Paul when He inspired him with the zeal which led him to undergo his great labours,—those labours which have rendered his name for ever memorable in the history of the human race.

He gave it to the early Evangelists, who, in spite of every opposition and at the sacrifice of every outward comfort, proclaimed among the nations the Gospel of salvation. He gave it to the confessors and martyrs who gladly suffered the loss of all things, and counted not their very lives dear to them, that they might testify for God among, and to their fellow-creatures. He has given it to a long list of faithful servants, whose names adorn the history of the Church, and to whom the defence or the progress of the truth has been owing from age to age. He has given it to many whose names are forgotten, but who, in their quiet spheres, have laboured and endured for the profit of those around them, and the honour of their Master and His cause. He has given it to many an obscure missionary, who, far from the sympathy of Christian neighbours, and in the midst of persecution, or of depressing influences scarcely less hard to bear, has told the story of salvation to savage tribes. He has given it to many a parish minister, who has gone out and in before his people, quietly doing his daily work, and telling to them and to their children the good news of God, till at length, his work being over, he has gone to his rest, and is now sleeping in peace near the walls of the sanctuary he used to love so well. He has given it to many a sister of mercy at the bedside of the poor, to many a physician at the couch of the dying. Ay, and to many of these poor themselves, and of these sufferers, He has given it likewise; to these poor, who, though

they could not aid their brethren with their substance, could, and did, with their sympathy, and by their meek example and their pious friendly prayers; —to these sufferers, for how often is there sunshine in the sick-room, warming and enlightening the whole house! In a word, the Lord has given, as it were, a portion of His own glory to those in every walk of life to whom He has granted His own spirit of beneficence, and who are striving, according to their opportunities, to diffuse its blessings. The world may not see it, but God and the angels see it. Those who get it may not see it themselves. Generally those who get it most see it least themselves. But they feel the bliss of it in their hearts.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”—JOHN xiv. 27.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”—JOHN xv. 11.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—MATTHEW xi. 28-30.

I HAVE placed these three passages together, because there is a form of expression to be found in all of them which seems to be capable of, and probably to require in each, a similar interpretation. If the interpretation to which I refer answered one passage only, we might entertain some doubt whether it could be admitted. But should it appear equally suitable in all the three, we may be more disposed to receive it as correct.

Our Lord was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Most true. His whole life was a life of sorrow and suffering.

Yet beneath that sorrow and suffering there was (who can doubt?) a certain tranquillity, nay, even a certain joy. He was doing His Father’s will; His Father’s presence was with Him; He had faith in His Father’s love; the work for which He had come into the world was steadily going on. Under these cir-

cumstances, He must have enjoyed a certain inward peace.

We can understand in a measure, from feelings of our own, how there may, and indeed must, have been, in strange combination with the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus Christ, a joy that was unspeakably deep and pleasant. When do *we* get a glimpse of what real joy is? Is it not when we are enabled to feel with some degree of vividness that God is with us? Is it not when we obtain a view of that Fatherhood of God, in the full persuasion and realisation of which our Lord abode habitually? The sense of God's presence and faith in God's love can comfort even *us* in our troubles. How much more must our Saviour have been comforted, considering the great faith which dwelt in Him! Nay, more; do we not feel sometimes that one great cause of our unhappiness in life is our being wrapt up in self, and that we should certainly be far more happy than we are, did we enter more than we do into the sorrows of our brethren, and thus become partakers with Christ in that portion of His sufferings which was most peculiar? Were it more true of us than it is, that, in such measure as is for us possible, we were bearing the griefs and carrying the sorrows of our neighbours, is there not something in us which tells us that, though in one view our comfort might be disturbed, yet in another we should be rising towards the highest joy that is accessible to man? It may to some appear a paradox when we thus speak of the co-exist-

ence in the same mind of sorrow and joy. But there are many paradoxes in human nature, and this combination, however paradoxical, is always realised in a greater or less degree by the earnest and loving spirit.

These considerations seem of themselves sufficient for the purpose for which they have been brought forward. But we have evidence of a more positive kind to the same effect. The whole impression which the Gospel narratives tend to produce is that of One who, though afflicted more than any man, yet maintained a patient tranquillity and even cheerfulness of spirit,—so genial a cheerfulness that the Pharisees condemned Him for it, and used it as an argument to discredit Him with the people, and, if possible, even with His own disciples: “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” Instead of encouraging moroseness or asceticism, we find Him taking the very opposite ground: “Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?” And He who said this to His companions to encourage them in cheerfulness, must doubtless have maintained a certain cheerfulness Himself.

But, indeed, no more is necessary than to refer to the passage from which two of the sayings at the head of this article are taken. In the 14th and following chapters of the Gospel of St John, we have our Saviour’s conversation with His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed. He knew what was before Him,—He had announced it. He

had told them that the time was now at hand when the great sorrow was to come upon Him, to which He had sometimes made allusion in former days. But though He knew what was approaching,—though He foresaw Gethsemane and Calvary now very near,—though He knew that the agony before Him would be something far more bitter than merely the anguish of death,—I think it impossible to read the chapters to which I have referred, without being convinced that, even at this time, there was a deep peace in His soul, a quiet tranquillity, a solemn joy. This is evident from the way in which He comforted the disciples, from the whole tone of what He said to them, and from the unexcited but most rich, most affectionate, and most impressive language of the prayer in which He commended them to His Father in Heaven. There is evidence that the disciples were deeply agitated and distressed by the prospect of His being taken from them, but He was Himself calm and peaceful.

“My peace,” He said, “I give unto you.” May not this mean the very peace which He then enjoyed,—not simply the peace He was about to purchase with His death, but the very peace which He enjoyed in His own soul,—His own peace,—the peace of God which was then keeping His own heart and mind?

We have quoted from another part of the same conversation the similar words,—“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.”

May not this mean, in like manner, the very joy which He then had? Is it not the easiest and most natural meaning to put upon the saying? The Lord had been telling the disciples about the house of many mansions to which He was going, about the Father's loving purposes in which He trusted, and about their own union with Him. His joy was derived from "abiding in the Father's love;" and therefore, in telling them that this love was resting upon them also, He was giving them His own joy, making them partakers in it, bestowing upon them the very same thing which upheld and enriched His own spirit.

The suitableness of this interpretation is perhaps a little more obvious in the second of these passages than in the first. But after we have seen it in the second, we can hardly fail to see it in the first likewise. There is nothing whatever to hinder us from thinking that the peace which our Lord bequeathed to His disciples, and through them to the whole Church, was the very peace which He himself enjoyed, just as the joy which He desired to provide for them was the same joy which filled His own heart.

Theologically, there can be no objection to these views. They are just a carrying out in one direction of that grand doctrine which fills so conspicuous a place in Scripture,—namely, our union with Christ as members of His body. If we are thus united, then, through Him who is our Head, we stand in a relation to God similar to that in which He stood; and, having received adoption in Him, we have the

same grounds for peace and joy which He had, or, in other words, we have the same peace and the same joy.

Let us now apply the same key to the passage from St Matthew.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly.” I fear that a meaning is sometimes put upon this passage which, when considered, is not only insufficient, but positively erroneous, and contradictory to principles most explicitly laid down by our Lord himself. “I am meek and lowly, and therefore I will not be so severe as the Rabbis; I will not lay upon my followers hard commandments, but an easy yoke;”—this is often supposed to be what our Lord intended. A more mistaken or unworthy idea could not be found. Our Lord came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil; and to imagine for a moment that He has diminished in any way any of the obligations that lie upon us, is to make Him the minister of sin, and therefore to be guilty of the greatest irreverence. He has not made the law easier than it was by requiring less at our hands; certainly not by substituting a spiritual for a ritual obedience, for to obey in the spirit is far more difficult than to comply with the letter. Nor has He at all provided that we may transgress with impunity. He has not made transgression a lighter thing than it was. But this is what He has done;—through disclosing the love and grace of God, He has made obedience easy and pleasant to them that believe.

His own yoke,—the yoke of obedience to God's will, —was easy to Him, because He knew and realised God's righteousness and mercy. These He has revealed to His disciples, and therefore, in like manner, their yoke may become easy to them. His yoke was easy, because He was meek and lowly; and through entering into that meekness and lowliness, their yoke would become to them what His was to Himself—easy and endurable, or rather indeed, pleasant and strengthening. His burden was light to Him, because He bore it as imposed of God, in whose love and grace He had perfect confidence; their burden would become light to them, if only they would learn of Him to regard it under the same aspect, and to bear it in the same temper and in the same faith.

Tradition is powerful. We have been so accustomed to think that the words "My yoke" and "My burden" must mean the yoke, the burden "which I impose," that we may find it difficult at first to enter into the above ideas. And yet, taking the words of the passage as they stand, they do seem to me the most natural ideas, and also to answer perfectly to the whole scheme of revealed doctrine concerning our Saviour's work; for was it not the object of that work to place us in a position towards God, similar to that in which He stood Himself, so that we might bear our burdens and our yoke, might endure our trials and discharge our duties, under similar encouragements, and in the comfort of similar hopes?

"Take my yoke, and learn of me." *And learn of*

me. Can we put any reasonable construction upon these last words, unless we understand them to mean that we are to learn meekness and lowliness, or, in other words, are to learn how to bear our burdens in the meek and lowly spirit of which we have in Christ so bright an example? Why is "learning" of Christ spoken of in such immediate connexion with taking His yoke? If He had meant "the yoke which I impose," it would have been more to the purpose to say, "Take my yoke upon you, and *be obedient* to me." But it is not of obedience He speaks; it is of "learning." And what are we to learn of Him? Lessons which He will make easy, because He is a meek and lowly Teacher? That certainly is not His idea. But this very meekness itself and this very lowliness itself,—for it is by learning meekness and lowliness that one finds rest to one's soul.

Then, again, our Lord had been saying immediately before that it was His function to reveal the Father. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." So we read in the verse immediately preceding the one where the weary and heavy laden are invited to come to our Lord for rest. What can the connexion be, but that this rest is to be found in that knowledge of the Father which the Son had come to give and was giving, and which was making His own yoke so easy, and His own burden so light, and

His own life, although a life of trouble, yet so deeply restful?

I go then to the upper room, where our Lord and His disciples have been celebrating their last passover. He has told them of His approaching sufferings and death, and has appointed an ordinance to keep these sufferings and that death in memory, down to the end of the world. They are all agitated, troubled, and weeping,—all, save Himself. Upon His brow a placid tranquillity sleeps. There is a deep peace in his soul. “My peace,” He says, “I give unto you;”—I have peace, because I trust in the Father; I am about to die, that you too may be reconciled to the Father, and may learn and have reason to trust in Him, and so I give you my peace,—not peace from trouble, but peace in trouble; that peace which I now have, I make over to you.

Such are the words of gracious promise to which I listen in the upper room. I pass next in imagination to rooms in my own parish, where I have seen Christian sufferers calm and resigned, and even joyful, under sufferings, the witnessing of which brought tears to one's eyes; and where I have been led to say in my heart, with silent but deep thanksgivings, ‘Christ is giving to His servants His legacy of peace,—breathing into His servant's heart a peace which the world cannot give and cannot take away.’

But I am led in imagination not only to the upper room at Jerusalem, not only to a scene of such special solemnity as that which there presents itself. I am

led to the places where men do congregate to go about their daily tasks. I see One there to all appearance no less burdened than any of His brethren,—nay, more so outwardly than they,—a poor man, and a man that had a hard struggle,—but with a wonderful calmness, a certain quiet but profound happiness resting on His forehead. I hear Him invite His neighbours round about Him to come and take His yoke. It perplexes me at first to understand Him. But I begin to see that He knows God, and that therefore His yoke is easy. He can reveal God, and therefore can make mine easy too. More wonderful still, He is Himself a revelation of God; He is God manifest in the flesh; His love is God's love; and as I come to understand Him, and to know how true and deep His love is, I learn that I can trust my all to God; and so, in a wonderful way, my heaviest burdens become light, and my times of sorrow peaceful.

As I write, the evening darkens down, and I am forced to come to a conclusion. O Thou, who sendest night and peace upon the world, send peace, I pray Thee, into my heart, and the hearts of all I love; but not the peace which cometh with darkness,—that rather which cometh with the knowledge of Thyself, and faith in Thy beloved Son, to whom, with Thee and the blessed Spirit, be honour, and praise, and glory, for ever. Amen.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."—JOHN xiv. 27.

ANY one who has the happiness to count among his cherished recollections the memory of the last days of some beloved Christian friend, who sank to his rest in the peace of a humble but confident Christian faith and hope, may remember perhaps how, when watching the death-bed to which he now looks back with such touching emotions, the wish may have crossed him, Oh that my departing friend could leave to me this peace which he has in his heart, and which to him is so blissful; it is to him a treasure worth a thousand worlds; I wish he could bequeath it to me!

Learn here the preciousness of Christ. Your Christian friend could not bequeath his peace. He had it for himself,—it was his own possession; and as the world did not give it, so neither could the world take it away. But as little could he bequeath it himself. Christ could, however; He could give what He had; He could leave as a legacy to His Church that which sustained His own spirit. He could, dying in peace, bequeath His own peace, for

His was not an ordinary death ; but He was dying to bring about our reconciliation to the Father ; He was dying to rise again and live for ever, and from the right hand of the Majesty on high to dispense to His Church the spirit of reconciliation,—that is, the Spirit of Peace.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.”—JOHN xv. 11.

WHAT things?

The things, of course, which are recorded in the previous context from the beginning of the 14th chapter, where the account of the conversation commences.

But what were these things,—these comforts which the Lord had presented to the minds of His disciples?

We may arrange them under four heads:—

I. The hope of heaven, (xiv. 1-5.) He had told them that He was going to prepare a place for them.

II. The revelation of the Father, (xiv. 5-12.) He had told them that in seeing Him, they had seen the Father, so that they might trust in God just as fully as they could have trusted in Him.

III. The promise of the Holy Ghost, (xiv. 12 to end.) He had told them that He would not leave them comfortless,¹ but would send the Spirit to abide with them and in them, and keep them in the knowledge and the love of God.

IV. Fellowship, or rather union, with Himself, (xv. 1-11.) He had declared to them the great and

blessed mystery of their union with Him as the branch is united to the vine, so that in and through Him they would abide in that Sonship, which, in proportion as it is realised, is the richest source of peace and joy.

There are other topics, no doubt, which come in more or less incidentally; but under these four heads we may arrange the bulk of what had passed between our Lord and the disciples.

Substantially, then, He had been telling them that it was open to them to trust in God just as He trusted, and to look forward to the blessedness which is at God's right hand just as He looked forward,—all in virtue of that union with Him which would be maintained in their consciousness by the indwelling of the Spirit, so that, like Himself, they would know God as their Father. And what is all this, but just to say, in other words, that He had been seeking to put them in possession of His own joy—the same joy which He had in His own heart? For by what was He made joyful, but by the very hopes and consolations in which He had been seeking to make them partakers?

These observations seem to corroborate the views we have taken in the last article but one.

They also suggest the practical reflection that, as Christian rest and peace and joy are the same which Christ had, we can expect to enjoy them as our actual possession, only in the degree in which the

same mind that was in Christ is also developed in us,—that is, in the degree in which we are living near to God in meekness and lowliness, in faith and love.

(1) “Comfortless,” ὀρφάνους, orphans.

It is a pity our translators had not adhered to the original word. Its beautiful suggestiveness I need not dwell upon. I may merely observe, that it connects this section of the chapter in a very interesting and touching way with the former section about the Divine Fatherhood. The word translated Comforter (*παρακλητος*) is from a totally different root. Our translators seemed to have wished to connect the work of the “Comforter” with the promise that the disciples were not to be left “comfortless.” But though, no doubt, there is a connexion in fact, as the context abundantly acknowledges and shows, there is no such verbal connexion as they would lead us to suppose. The true verbal connexion is rather such as to lead back our minds, as I have said already, to that Fatherhood of God, a feeling of which it is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit to keep alive in our hearts,—whence He is called “the Spirit of Adoption.”

Another thing strikes us. When we find our Saviour saying, “I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you,” we cannot but observe that the language which He uses is in a manner Fatherly language. He mingles up, as it were, His own func-

tions and those of the Father in a way that would be quite unaccountable on Socinian principles. I cannot understand how any person can read this passage even by itself, and still more in its connexion, without feeling that a mere man could not have used such words without extraordinary, and, in such an one as Christ, inconceivable presumption. Now-a-days, when it is so often alleged that our Lord himself never made any superhuman claims, it is important to notice all passages of this sort.

Wiclif translates this verse—"I schal not leave you fadirles;" and the Rheims version—"I will not leave you orphans." The Authorised version has "orphans" in the margin.

“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.”—JOHN xiv. 1.

THE verb translated “believe” in this passage may be either in the imperative or in the indicative mood. There is no difference in the original, and therefore there is nothing to guide us how we ought to render it in English, except the sense of the passage. To me it seems to make the best sense when read thus:—“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God; believe also in me.” (1)

I do not suppose that these words were spoken continuously, with no more pause between the different clauses than may be indicated by a comma or a semicolon. I suppose that after He had said, “Let not your heart be troubled,” our Saviour waited a little in silence before adding, “believe in God;” and then a little again before going on to say, “believe also in me.” I would suggest that the passage might be pointed in some such way as to indicate these pauses: as for instance, “Let not your heart be troubled . . . believe in God . . . believe also in me.” This, however, of course only if the views about to be stated as to the meaning of the passage are thought correct, and if it is further thought that the pointing suggested helps to bring them out.

What was it that was troubling the hearts of the disciples? There was the prospect of their Master's death; but there was also something more distressing. There were those exceedingly painful questionings, and hesitations, and suspicions, which, considering their Jewish ideas, the events that were transpiring must have excited in their minds. They trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel, but now, according to His own announcement, He was about to fall into the hands of His enemies, and to be crucified ignominiously. What a shock to all their feelings! What a disappointment to all their hopes! We can imagine into what deep distress this must have thrown them; and, I daresay, the worst thing to them was that, in the circumstances, they could hardly see that the Lord had dealt by them quite honestly. Would not His death make Him out a deceiver? They had trusted Him, and trusted in Him, and they had imagined that the house of their confidence was founded on a rock; but now the winds were blowing, and the floods were coming, and lo! it was the sand. So they must have feared, and it must have pained them almost to anguish.

The difficulty then which, in the circumstances, the disciples felt most of all was the difficulty of continuing to believe in their Master. Accordingly He says to them, "Believe in God." He has said, "Let not your heart be troubled;" then He pauses for a little, and then adds, "believe in God," as if He had said, answering their thoughts, "If you find it

difficult to continue believing in me, (as no wonder though you do,) at least continue to believe in God; do not too hastily suppose that all is going wrong; remember that there is One who governs all things in wisdom, and whose ways are often dark in the meantime, though always righteous in design, and good in the result; in Him at least do not give up your faith." There follows here, as I imagine, another pause. Our Lord waits to let these thoughts get time to pass through the minds of the disciples. And then He goes on, "believe also in me." We can see how the former thoughts prepared them for this. Their minds have been directed to God, who always works in wisdom and love, though often in the darkness, and thus they are prepared to say further within themselves, 'Let us not be too hasty in doubting as to our Master; let us not forget all at once the many tokens we have had presented to us in past days of His power and goodness; perhaps there may come light yet to dispel the present clouds, for the ways of God are wonderful; let us hope and wait.'

Sometimes it is easier to believe in God first; sometimes it is easier to believe in Christ first. In the present instance it was easier for the disciples to believe in God first, and their continuing to believe in God was fitted to aid them very materially in continuing to believe in their Master also, notwithstanding what must have seemed to them such extremely unfavourable appearances. Often afterwards, I can imagine, when fighting their battle with an evil

world, under circumstances frequently of a very depressing character, they would find it easier to believe in Christ first; I mean, their faith in Christ, confirmed by His resurrection, and established in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, would be a great and blessed help to them to enable them to believe that a world in which they met with so much opposition, and laboured often to apparently so little purpose, was really after all God's world, and they themselves the objects of God's love.

It seems to me that this remark might be generalised not without a degree of truth. In the case of difficulties of a more peculiarly speculative character, it is, I think, for the most part easier to believe in God first. In the case of difficulties touching the ways of providence, it is, I think, for the most part easier to believe in Christ first. In the former case, faith in God is a help towards faith in Christ; in the latter, faith in Christ towards faith in God.*

(¹) Beza, following Erasmus, has a good note on this passage. There are four ways, he observes, in which it may be translated:—

I. "Ye believe in God, ye believe also in me;" as if our Lord had said, 'This faith will keep you unconquered.'

II. "Believe in God, believe also in me;" which would give the sense, 'Do not be troubled.' But how

* This article was left unfinished by Dr Robertson.

is it possible we should not be troubled? 'Ye will not be troubled if ye believe in my Father and me.'

III. "Ye believe in God; believe also in me." That is, 'There is none of you but will say that he believes in God; believe also in me.'

IV. "Believe in God, and ye believe in me." That is, 'Believe in God, which if ye do, ye believe in me at the same time.'

Beza adopts the third of these possible renderings, and so do the translators of our authorised version.

We prefer the second, of which, however, we think that Beza has missed, in a great measure, the point and beauty.

It may be added, that the translation we have preferred is supported by the authority of the venerable Tyndale, who renders the words, "Believe in God, and believe in me."

“ Without me ye can do nothing.”—*JOHN xv. 5.*

THESE words belong to the Parable of the Vine and the Branches. “ Without me,” says our Lord, “ ye can do nothing ; ye can no more bring forth any fruit of righteousness to the praise of God, than a branch can bring forth fruit when severed from the vine.”

I wish to note here a remark made to me by a friend from whom I have learned many things. It is often, he observed, said in prayer that we cannot of ourselves think a right thought or do a right action, and this is included among our confessions of sin. Such words, for example, are employed as these, ‘ we acknowledge and confess our sinfulness and depravity, and that we can neither of ourselves think a right thought, nor perform a good deed.’ But, said my friend, even Adam in Paradise could not of himself think a right thought, nor perform a good deed. He was made a dependent creature, and the moment he attempted to throw aside his dependence was the moment of the fall. He could think and act aright only through the Spirit of God. And this is true of all humanity. We are all made to be dependent ; and to attempt, or even wish to throw aside that dependence, is rebellion against our Creator.

It is a fact, then, that we cannot of ourselves think a right thought or do a right action ; but it is a fact which belongs to our humanity, and not to our depravity. In other words, it is a fact, but not a sin, and it ought not to be included among our confessions of sin. What we have really to confess and lament is, that we are so self-willed, presumptuous, and proud, as to wish so much as we do to cast off our dependence, and to be strong in our own strength, rather than in that of Him who giveth strength and power unto His people, and separate from whom we have not, and cannot have, and ought not to desire to have, any strength or power at all.

Will my reader consider within himself whether the thing he ought to confess and lament be, that he cannot of himself live aright; or whether it be not rather, that he tries so often to do it as of himself only, forgetting to seek and to use with sufficient earnestness the help that is offered from on high?

“ Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world . . .
only Luke is with me.”—2 TIM. iv. 10.

YOU have looked with interest at the appearance of the hill-sides after heavy rain. Every watercourse is full. A hundred white lines mark the track of as many torrents rushing down in foam. You have visited the same hill-sides a few days afterwards. The watercourses are now empty. You can cross dryshod the gullies which were filled by raging torrents. But here and there you come upon a stream which is not dry yet. It is still running, full of clear water. Perhaps it was not swollen by the rain so much as some others; but neither has it been dried up by the drought. And how is this? If you had followed it upwards, you would have discovered; for you would have come, high up among the mountains, to a place of springs, or to a lake where the rains of heaven are stored, and out of which it is fed perennially. This is the secret. It is because it has its source in this reservoir that it continues to flow all the year round, by day and night, in summer time and winter time;—there, in the uplands, leaping precipices as if in the play of its sportive youth;—there, below, in the quiet meadows, refreshing the grass and giving drink to the cattle,—delighting your

eye with its crystal pureness and your ear with its gentle song,—and when you have left its margin, and there is no one near to look or to listen, still smiling back to the sun from its many dimpled pools, or singing quiet music to the listening stars.

I suppose that Luke held firm to the principles of the Christian faith when Demas had deserted them, because to him they *were* principles,—that is to say, because there was in his heart a deep reservoir of genuine Christian convictions, sufficient to maintain in full flow the current of a holy life, even when the drought arose of discouragement and persecution.

“Trees of righteousness.”—ISAIAH lxi. 3.

How very often in Scripture this figure of speech is used!

“He” (the righteous man) “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,” (Ps. i. 3.)

“He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit,” (Jer. xvii. 8.)

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon,” (Ps. xcii. 12.)

“The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant,” (Isa. v. 7.)

“The tree is known by its fruit,” (Matt. xii. 33.)

It is easy to see the propriety of the figure in many respects.

For example, in the Divine life, there must be—

A **ROOT**—of faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A **STEM** or trunk, to connect the root with the branches,—regenerate affections, to carry the sap from the root to the rest of the tree.

LEAVES OF PROFESSION. “Whosoever shall con-

fess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," (Matt. x. 32, 33.)

FRUITS OF HOLINESS. "Faith without works is dead," (James ii. 20.)

Also the growth is by DEVELOPMENT from within: not by accretion, as a cairn might be piled up by heaping together loose stones, but by orderly development, under the blessing of God, according to the laws of human nature.

Also the growth is by ASSIMILATION. The plant assimilates to its own substance things that are extremely unlike itself, as, for instance, the moisture of the earth and the various chemical salts which are mingled by nature, or may be mingled by the husbandman, with the soil. Thus, in like manner, the Christian assimilates, as it were, the events of life, and even its temptations. Out of prosperity he draws thankfulness; out of adversity, fortitude; out of temptation, moral experience and strength. Whatever happens to him, he extracts out of it spiritual strength and fruitfulness; and thus he is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, or a vine in the vineyard of the Lord; for truly nothing happens that is not designed by the Great Husbandman to supply nutriment to the soul, and promote the production of the fruits of righteousness.

Perhaps it is hardly so often noticed as another feature in the parable thus derived from the vegetable

world, that growth proceeds by CIRCULATION. The sap of the ground is imbibed by the roots, and then sent up through the pores and vessels of the trunk to the branches and the leaves; by means of the leaves it is exposed to the action of the air, which induces certain chemical changes in its constitution; and then it is sent back again to feed and strengthen the branches and the trunk, and even the very roots from which it came. You might kill a plant quite as certainly by keeping it stripped of leaves as by destroying its roots. It will die in the one case no less than in the other. Just in the same way, of course there can be no permanent religious fruitfulness unless there be in the heart a root of religious principle of faith and love. But it is equally true that if we are not sufficiently careful to maintain a righteous life, to do righteous things, to abound in the works of faith and the labours of love, the very roots themselves will dwindle and become weak. It is a sure way to increase faith and love when one endeavours humbly to do what good he can in the world. It is a sure way to diminish and destroy them when one is negligent as to the practical duties of Christian living. A religion of sentiment without action will not endure in strength, any more than a tree without producing leaves in its season. This is quite as true as that religious action is not to be looked for, unless where there is a root of religious motive from which it may proceed.

Let us keep in view this close connexion of the

outward and the inward life. It teaches many things. Our week-days would be better did we make a better use of our Sundays; but then, on the other hand, we should make a better use of our Sundays were we more desirous that our week-days should be good. Our life would be better were we more careful to bring our Christian principles to bear upon it; our Christian principles themselves would derive additional clearness, weight, and value from the same process. Visit the sick and comfort the afflicted, deny yourselves to all ungodliness, and strive, in self-forgetful imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ, to do the will of your Father which is in heaven, all ye who desire to have your faith established and your love confirmed, and so to possess within yourselves the roots of peace and joy.

When the wood is well ripened in autumn, we look for a good crop next year. When a Christian is well ripened before he dies, what may we look for in heaven?

“He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.”—PSALM ciii. 7. *

I WISH to direct your attention at present to the variation of the Psalmist's language in this verse,—how it differs in clause first from clause second. Clause first, “*His ways*”—“He made known His ways unto Moses.” Clause second, “*His acts*”—“He made known His acts unto the children of Israel.” Now, if you look at this variation of language, it is fitted to suggest some reflections to which it may not be useless to give a little heed. I do not suppose, indeed, that the Psalmist had it intentionally before him to suggest the reflections to which I refer. He merely uses naturally, but correctly, the language which came up to him as suitable language in which to describe with brevity the goodness of the Lord to the fathers. But why is the language correct and suitable? If you ask that question, it will lead to the reflections to which I wished to come.

“His ways.” “His acts.” You know the difference between one's ways and one's acts. One has a *way* of doing *acts*. One's acts are the things he

* The following is a fragment of a sermon which, although never more fully written, Dr Robertson preached in April 1863. It has been inserted here, among the Thoughts and Expositions, as it somewhat resembles in character several of these articles.

does:—one's ways are rather his style of doing them, his habit in doing them, his practice viewed as a result of his nature and principles. You can know a man's *acts* simply by looking at them—you can see what he does. But to know a man's *ways*, implies deeper acquaintance. You must observe a man—you must study a man—to know a man's ways with any degree of correctness. The difference is clear between *acts* and *ways*; you understand it a great deal better than I can express it.

Well, the Lord made known His acts to the children of Israel. They saw what He did. The plagues of Egypt; the dividing of the Red Sea; the many wonderful manifestations of His presence and power which He gave them in the wilderness;—the children of Israel saw all that. Thus to the whole people the Lord made known *His acts*. But they did not equally know *His ways*. Not equally evident were the wisdom and righteousness and love which governed all His dealings,—as well when He sent them burdens to bear, as when He sent them blessings to enjoy; as well when He made them feel the desolation and sterility of the wilderness, as when they rejoiced in deliverance from Egyptian taskmasters; as well when they were grieved and tormented with the pangs of hunger and thirst, as when they went to gather the manna which fell around the camp, or to drink of the water which followed them from the smitten rock of Horeb. I say, though the whole people saw the Lord's acts, they did not know His

ways; and the proof is, that they murmured so often and so much, that they fell so easily into distrust, that the first trial made them forget great and countless mercies, that they so readily and so frequently repined and rebelled. These things are the proof that, though they saw the Lord's acts, they did not know His ways.

“He made known His ways unto Moses.” The people did not know them, but Moses knew them. He saw deeper than the people did. He had an insight beyond what the people had; and so, just because *he* saw the ways of the Lord, while *they* saw only the acts of the Lord, he was fitted to be their leader,—he was fitted to go before them, for he was before them. While they saw acts, he saw the principles by which these acts were governed,—the justice, the righteousness, the far-sighted kindness which might require, and often did require, to chasten for profit. The thing that upheld Moses on many occasions when the people were fainting, the thing that gave him courage when the people were afraid, the thing that made him urge them forward when they would rather have gone backward, was just that the Lord had made known His ways to his more thoughtful and more pious mind, that he had insight into the principles on which the Lord was acting, that he had learned as it were to see into the Lord's purposes, and into the Lord's heart.

And now, my friends, I want to say that the

great thing still is to see into the Lord's ways. The Lord's acts are different at different times. Sometimes He gives us pleasures, and sometimes He sends us troubles. Sometimes He grants us joys, and sometimes He sends us sorrows. His acts are different, but the great thing is to see that His ways are uniform; that all His acts are governed by uniform principles of justice, rectitude, and kindness; that, whether He brings us into a place of barrenness and hunger, or whether He sends us manna for our food, —whether He leads us through a sterile desert, or brings us to a place of fountains and palm-trees,—the whole object and scope of His dealing is to bring us at length to the promised land. This is the great thing,—thus to see into the Lord's counsels,—thus to discern His ways,—thus to know what are His aims, and on what principles all His dispensations are arranged.

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“ Now the names of the twelve apostles are these : the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother ; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother ; Philip, and Bartholomew ; Thomas, and Matthew the publican ; James the son of Alphæus, and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus ; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.”—
MATTHEW x. 2-4.

ST MARK tells us (vi. 7) that our Lord sent out the twelve, *two and two*, to prepare them for the apostolic duties they would have to perform afterwards ;—for such, I suppose, was the meaning of their first mission.

St Matthew, it will be observed, gives their names in pairs. It has often been thought that he gives them according as they were associated by our Lord in sending them out. The idea seems very probable.

Can we see, on looking at the pairs given by St Matthew, any fitness in the association ? Can we see that the men who were probably sent together for purposes of mutual encouragement, were really fitted to encourage and support one another ? Let us consider this question for a moment.

“ Pair first—Simon and Andrew ; brothers for one thing ; attached brothers probably, for another. It was Andrew who first brought Simon to Christ, (John i. 41.) “ He first findeth his own brother Simon, and

saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Then, for another thing still,—Peter was a bold, impetuous, hasty man : but we know very little about Andrew, his name comes very little before us in the Gospel history. May we not infer, therefore, that he may have been perhaps of a slower and more retiring character, fitted to temper Peter's zeal, to restrain his haste, and to balance his impetuosity ?

Pair second—James and John ; again brothers ; "Boanerges," our Lord called them, or "Sons of Thunder." This because of their fiery zeal, (Mark ix. 38 ; Luke ix. 54.) Natural dispositions are greatly modified under the influence of Divine grace. The zeal of James led to that eminent position in the early Church—that position of prominence among its leaders—which brought down upon him at a very early date the persecuting rage of its enemies, and led to his being the first *apostolic* martyr, (Acts xii. 2.) The zeal of John, continuing equally real, but assuming a different form, became developed into love. From all we know of James and John, they were brothers who would find peculiar delight in being associated in the work to which our Lord appointed them.

Pair third—Philip and Bartholomew. Bartholomew is commonly supposed, and has been supposed from the earliest times, to be the same with Nathanael. (i) It was Philip who first brought Nathanael to see Jesus, (John i. 46.) Philip and Bartholomew, there-

fore, were old friends. There was this tie between them. There was also that other tie, so close and endearing, which binds the faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ to him who may have been the instrument, under God, of guiding him first to that Redeemer in whom he has found peace and joy, and the beginnings of eternal life. It is easy to understand, therefore, why Philip and Bartholómew should have been associated.

Pair fourth—Thomas and Matthew. We know but little as to either of these two, but what we do know may incline us to think that they were wisely yoked together. The most memorable thing related about Thomas is that, after the resurrection, he wished to be allowed to touch our Lord's wounds, in order to be convinced that He was really the Crucified One who had risen from the dead;—thus showing a certain slowness of heart to believe. Almost the only thing related about Matthew is, that our Lord called him when sitting at the receipt of custom, and that he obeyed the summons with the utmost promptitude;—thus showing a certain readiness and alacrity. There was also, perhaps, a degree of self-assertion about Thomas. "Except," he said, "I see the prints of the nails, I will not believe;" others may, but *I* will not. On the other hand, Matthew was simple-minded, modest, and humble. The rest of the Evangelists speak of him merely by his name. It is touching to notice how he speaks of himself as Matthew *the publican*, not forgetting the despised class

from which he was chosen, but always keeping it in view modestly and humbly. May we not suppose, then, that the characters of Thomas and Matthew were in some sort supplementary the one of the other; that the tardiness ⁽²⁾ of the first might be stimulated by the promptitude of the second; while the alacrity of the second would be prevented from becoming rashness by the caution and deliberation of the first? It is always good for a man who has some sceptical elements in his nature to be associated with one who is at once simple-hearted and of high self-denying character; while, on the other hand, the same association is good for the latter also, as a check in the way to superstition or fanaticism.

Pair fifth—James the son of Alphæus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddæus. ⁽³⁾ It has been believed from very early times that Lebbaeus, or Thaddæus, are other names for Jude, used, perhaps, among other reasons, to distinguish him from Judas the traitor. Now, concerning both James and Jude, we may infer something from the Epistles they have respectively left to the Church. The Epistle of St James is strongly practical, setting high value on Christian duty, and putting strongly forward its obligations and necessity. In the Epistle of St Jude, on the other hand, we can see, short as it is, the marks of a turn of mind at once more speculative and more fiery, ⁽⁴⁾ and as well adapted to stir up and inflame, as the practical sense of the other apostle was to advise and to guide.

Pair sixth—Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot. In the word Canaanite, there is no reference to the “Canaan” of the Old Testament. The Canaanites in that sense had long perished out of the land. Neither is there any reference to Cana of Galilee, as has been supposed by some. “Canaanite,” as here used, is the English form of a Hebrew word, which means the same thing as Zelotes in the Greek, so that “the Canaanite”⁽⁵⁾ of St Matthew and the “Zelotes” of St Luke are, in fact, identical designations. Just as the other Simon was in Hebrew Cephas, and in Greek Peter, Cephas and Peter being respectively the Hebrew and Greek for “a rock;” so the Simon who was sent out in company with Judas Iscariot, was in Hebrew “a Canaanite,” and in Greek “Zelotes,” both words having the same meaning,—namely, that he originally belonged to the Jewish sect called the Zealots, a turbulent and fanatical party, whose excesses led at length to the invasion of Judea by Titus, and were the proximate cause of the destruction of Jerusalem. Under the influence of Divine grace, though men’s natural dispositions are modified, they are not destroyed, or even entirely changed, but only purified and elevated; and if Simon, after becoming a disciple of Christ, retained anything of the ardour and vehemence of the party with which he had been originally connected, we can understand with how much propriety he was made the companion of one so cold and selfish as that unhappy man, whom, however, as it turned out, no heat could

warm, and whose coldness and selfishness caused him at length so miserable a fall, and have branded his name with such eternal disgrace.

(1) Bartholomew = Bar-Tholomew = son of Tolomæus, or Tolmai, is merely a patronymic, implying that this apostle had another name, just as Bar-Jonas, the son of Jonas, was also Simon, or Peter.

(2) The memorable saying of Thomas, when our Lord was about to go to Bethany to visit the family of Lazarus, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him," is by no means against our view of the character of this apostle. There may have been at least as much of doubt as there was of boldness in the saying. Thomas probably meant to imply that it was foolish to think of going to Bethany at a time when our Lord could not visit the neighbourhood of Jerusalem without much danger. As there is nothing against our view in this incident, so there is a good deal in its favour in the only other incident besides that mentioned above, which has been recorded concerning him. He said, we are told, at the Last Supper, when our Lord spoke of His disciples following Him to the place whither He was going, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This seems to indicate the same slow and somewhat sceptical character we have attributed to St Thomas.

(³) Thaddæus is supposed to be a Syriac form of the name Jude, both names being thought to be derived from the same root, הוֹדָה (hodah,) “to praise.” This is Dr Wordsworth’s opinion; see his note *in loc.* Others derive it from תֵּד (Tad) “the breast,” (“*mamma*,”) and thus connect it with Lebbæus; see next note. This, however, seems an improbable etymology, for תֵּד is not לֵב, but has rather the peculiar meaning above indicated.

(⁴) If Jerome is right, and Lebbæus is derived from לֵב (leb,) “the heart,” and therefore signifies “heartly”—or rather “ardent;” and if, as is likely, this name was given him, as descriptive of something in his character, to distinguish him from Judas the traitor, we have here some confirmation of the idea thrown out in the above article. I am aware that some of the best MSS. omit the name Lebbæus altogether, and give only Thaddæus; and to those which were formerly known to have this reading, there must now be added the important *Codex Sinaiticus* (Scrivener’s Collation.) It is difficult, however, to understand how Lebbæus, which is found nowhere else in the Gospels, could have crept into the text; while, on the other hand, it is quite intelligible that if St Matthew wrote “Lebbæus,” the words, “who is surnamed Thaddæus,” may have been written on the margin, for the purpose of explaining that the Lebbæus of St Matthew was the same with the Thaddæus of St Luke. From the

margin they might find their way into the text. On the whole, taking into consideration the variations of the MSS. as to this passage, and the nature of the case, it seems to be most likely that St Matthew wrote "Lebbæus," and nothing more. I am aware also of the disputes among critics as to the authorship both of the Epistle of Jude and of that of James. It would take too much space to go into this question here; and indeed it is unnecessary, for the whole article to which this note is appended makes no claim to any other than a conjectural character. We may assume, for its purposes, that the ordinary belief is right as to the authorship of the documents referred to.

(5) It has been well suggested that were a revision to be made of our English translation of the Scriptures, the spelling might be here changed from "Canaanite" to "Kananite," or the like, so as to make it clear that there is no reference to the "Canaanites" so often mentioned in the Old Testament. "Kananian," or "Cananian," would accomplish this object still better, and would answer to the reading *καναναίος*, which, following many of the best MSS., Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and others, have substituted for the *κανανιτης* of the received text. The Rheims translation gives Simon Cananaeus; Tyndale, Simon of Caue.

“ And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
—Acts ii. 47.¹

THERE is no doubt whatever that this passage, as it stands in our translation, does not represent the original correctly. It ought to run, not “such as should be saved,” but “such as were saved,” or “were in the process of being saved.” There can be no question but that this is the proper rendering of the original, and it is difficult to understand why our translators should have thought of giving any other, unless, indeed, they were under the influence of the hurtful idea, that salvation is entirely a future thing,—a thing which we are to look for in the next world, and not at all in this.

St Luke's notion, on the contrary, is, that in being added to the Church, men were saved already, or, at any rate, were being saved,—were placed, as it were, under that process of spiritual education which was continually working out their salvation. The only one of the important English versions of the Scriptures in which this idea has been preserved is the earliest of them all—that, namely, of Wiclif, who renders “the Lord increased daily them that were made safe.”

How significant the original is! how much more significant than our translation! Those that were added to the Church were saved already;—they were

saved from ignorance and superstition,—they were saved from the influence of their former false ideas,—they were saved from the many evils attendant upon spiritual darkness. In a high sense, to be added to the Church is to be saved already, for it is to have learned to put our trust in God, as our Father in Christ Jesus. Through this trust we are delivered from the power of our sins, we are strengthened to resist and overcome our temptations, we are enabled to bear our trials and sorrows patiently and hopefully. And thus to be delivered and strengthened, thus to be set free from our worst misery, thus to be enabled to look our trials, and even death, in the face,—is not this in a high sense to be saved already? Are not we to a large extent saved already when we are set free from all slavish fear, and enabled, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to rejoice in God, and therefore in all God's dispensations? A true member of the Church is saved already, in so far as he is delivered from ignorance and ungodliness, and brought under the comforting and sanctifying power of our heavenly Father's revealed love; while, at the same time, he is in the process of being saved always more and more, through the various means of spiritual education of which he is in the enjoyment, and by the use of which he is growing in grace and in meetness for that heavenly world where at length our salvation shall be made perfect.

It is a great question, shall we be saved? It is a greater, *are we being saved?* This latter is the ques-

tion for us practically. Are we being saved in the use of the various means of grace which we enjoy, from selfishness, from worldly-mindedness, from envy and wrath and malice, from slavish fear as regards God, from uncharitableness as regards our fellow-creatures? Are we being saved, in short, from the dominion of our sins? If we are being saved now, we may trust God as concerns the salvation that shall be hereafter.

(¹) *τους σωζομενους*, a present or imperfect participle, the meaning of which, beyond all doubt, is, and must be, as we have explained. The Authorised version would have been right had the original read *σωθησομενους* in the future. But for such a reading there is no authority whatever. Beza's editions, of which our translators have made so much use, agree with the *Textus Receptus*, and all the MSS. in the reading, which, probably for the reason we have suggested in the text, has been so often rendered incorrectly. It has been supposed that the rendering has been given in accordance with the views of the Calvinistic section of the translators employed in making our present authorised version. I agree with Dr Trench however, (*Remarks on A. V. c. X.*) in thinking this supposition unfounded. All the old English translations (*Wiclif's* excepted)—even the *Rheims*, which cannot be suspected of favouring Calvinism—agree with the Authorised. The *Vulgate* renders to the same effect, "*qui salvi fierent.*"

“How can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house?”—MATTHEW xii. 29.

WE have here an important view as to the significance of our Lord’s miracles.

He had just healed a man who was both blind and dumb. The Pharisees said that He had done so by the power of Beelzebub. To this He replies that His miracles were themselves such, and were done in attestation of doctrines which also were such, as could not be reasonably supposed to proceed from Beelzebub, whose kingdom, on the contrary, they had a direct tendency to overthrow. In the course of the argument, He put the question which we have quoted, and which opens, we repeat, an important view of the significance of the miracles.

Common views are,—(1.) That the miracles were intended as proofs of our Lord’s divine commission; and (2.) That, besides being attestations of the revelation He came to make, they were integral portions of that revelation, being of such a kind, and done for such objects and in such a way, as to disclose the goodness and mercy of Him who did them, and therefore of His Father in heaven, whose image and glory He was. As the king’s mark, say for example, upon

sterling silver or gold, is often also the likeness of the king's face; so the miracles which authenticated our Lord's mission were of such a character as to illustrate that righteousness and love which the whole Gospel was intended to declare.

Such are two views with respect to the significance of the miracles with which we are familiar. But our Lord suggests a third. He suggests that we may look upon them as *trophies* of the defeat of the prince of darkness. "How," He asks, "can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house?" The strong man is the prince of evil; his house, the world; his goods, those sorrows and sufferings of men which give him a malicious joy; the spoiling of his house, those deliverances of them whom he had long held bound, which were effected by the power and grace of Christ—those works of healing which He performed—those rescues of suffering men and women from the various miseries we have been taught to connect with sin,—by which our Saviour's ministry was attested and illustrated. These were the spoils of the strong man's house, and therefore, so to speak, just so many trophies set up upon the world to assure us that the power of our enemy has been broken, to give us courage in resisting his wiles and works, and to cheer us with the good hope that a time will come when sorrow and suffering will be for ever banished from the redeemed universe, and all things shall be placed under His feet, who

is the Prince of Peace, and who will rule in righteousness for ever and ever.

Just as you may see in the arsenals of a nation the guns that were taken from the enemy in some great war, proudly stored up in memory of its victories; so, in the history of the world, the miracles of mercy performed by Christ might be likened to those proud memorials, being, as they are, spoils taken from the enemy in that great struggle in which the Captain of our salvation conquered for us. Nor only so, but because they commemorate this victory, they become in another aspect more than commemorations,—predictions namely,—predictions most glad and cheering of victory in their own life-battle to all who fight it in the strength of the Lord, and of the final and utter expulsion of whatever can hurt or destroy, from the holy mountain of our God.

When I read then how our Saviour gave sight to the blind, and voice to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf, how He cleansed the leper, and healed the paralytic, and raised the dead, I do not merely say, with Nicodemus, “No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him;” nor do I stop even at the high and consolatory thought that they reveal to me an ever-living love to which I can resort, now and at all times, for the remedy of every evil, and the supply of every necessity; but I am warranted to go further yet, and look forward to the blessed age when the purposes of this love shall have their full accomplishment, and He who came

to destroy the works of the devil, having all His enemies subdued under Him, shall reign in the glory of His own and His Father's righteousness over a world whence death and sin are banished evermore.

This is an exceeding pleasant view of the meaning of the miracles. I think it is justified by the words of Christ, especially when looked at in connexion with the general tenor of New Testament doctrine and promise. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

THE END.





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