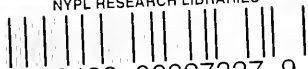


NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06827327 9



The New York
Public Library,
ASTOR LENOX TILDEN FOUNDATION

S E R M O N S

BY

HENRY MELVILL, B. D.,

MINISTER OF CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE TOWER OF LONDON;

FORMERLY FELLOW AND TUTOR OF ST. PETER'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

COMPRISING

ALL THE DISCOURSES PUBLISHED BY CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR.

EDITED BY

RIGHT REV. C. P. M'ILVAINE, D. D.

BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF OHIO.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II

New-York :

STANFORD AND SWORDS, 137, BROADWAY.

BOSTON: CROCKER & BREWSTER. PHILADELPHIA: GEORGE S. APPLETON.
CINCINNATI: DERBY, BRADLEY & CO.

1850.

77c,

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

SERMONS ON CERTAIN OF THE LESS PROMINENT FACTS AND REFERENCES IN SACRED STORY.—FIRST SERIES.

SERMON I.—THE FAITH OF JOSEPH ON HIS DEATH-BED	5
SERMON II.—ANGELS AS REMEMBRANCERS	15
SERMON III.—THE BURNING OF THE MAGICAL BOOKS	24
SERMON IV.—THE PARTING HYMN	33
SERMON V.—CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD	41
SERMON VI.—THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT	51
SERMON VII.—THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM	60
SERMON VIII.—THE THIRST OF CHRIST	71
SERMON IX.—THE SECOND DELIVERY OF THE LORD'S PRAYER	80
SERMON X.—PECULIARITIES IN THE MIRACLE IN THE COAST OF DECAPOLIS	88
SERMON XI.—THE LATTER RAIN	99
SERMON XII.—THE LOWLY ERRAND	106
SERMON XIII.—NEHEMIAH BEFORE ARTAXERXES	116
SERMON XIV.—JABEZ	124

SECOND SERIES.

SERMON I.—THE YOUNG MAN IN THE LINEN CLOTH	139
SERMON II.—THE FIRE ON THE SHORE	147
SERMON III.—THE FINDING THE GUEST-CHAMBER	156
SERMON IV.—THE SPECTRE'S SERMON A TRUISM	164
SERMON V.—VARIOUS OPINIONS	174
SERMON VI.—THE MISREPRESENTATIONS OF EVE	183
SERMON VII.—SEEKING AFTER FINDING	191
SERMON VIII.—THE BIRD'S NEST	201
SERMON IX.—ANGELS OUR GUARDIANS IN TRIFLES	209
SERMON X.—THE APPEARANCE OF FAILURE	217
SERMON XI.—SIMON THE CYRENIAN	225
SERMON XII.—THE POWER OF THE EYE	235
SERMON XIII.—PILATE'S WIFE	245
SERMON XIV.—THE EXAMINATION OF CAIN	256

SERMONS PREACHED ON PUBLIC OCCASIONS.

SERMON I.—THE GREATNESS OF BEING USEFUL	267
SERMON II.—CHRISTIANITY THE GUARDIAN OF HUMAN LIFE	274
SERMON III.—THE LEAST OF SERVICE TO THE GREATEST	280
SERMON IV.—THE BLESSING IN THE CURSE	286
SERMON V.—THE SHIPWRECK	294
SERMON VI.—ANGELS REJOICING IN THE GOSPEL	299
SERMON VII.—THE WORD IN SEASON	309
SERMON VIII.—CHURCH BUILDING	316
SERMON IX.—THE FINAL TEST	327
SERMON X.—THE LOST SHEEP	335
SERMON XI.—BROKEN CISTERNS	344
SERMON XII.—THE MACEDONIAN PHANTOM	353
SERMON XIII.—EDUCATION	363

NEW THEOL SEM LIB

S E R M O N S

ON CERTAIN OF THE

LESS PROMINENT FACTS AND REFERENCES IN SACRED STORY.

FIRST SERIES.

S E R M O N I.

THE FAITH OF JOSEPH ON HIS DEATH-BED.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.”—HEBREWS, XI. 22.

We have often occasion to point out to you what a difference there is in the standards by which God and men judge the relative worth or importance of things. In one great sense, indeed, there cannot be to God any of those distinctions which exist to ourselves; for, wondrously exalted as He is, things must be equal in his sight, which differ in ours in many respects and degrees. It is undoubtedly to forget the immeasurable distance of the Creator from the creature, to imagine that He who sitteth in the heavens, swaying the universal sceptre, regards as great, and as small, just what are reckoned such in our feeble computations. There ought to be nothing clearer than this—if our great and our small were great and small to God. God would be little more than one of ourselves, judging by the same measures, and therefore possessing only the same faculties.

Yet, though the distinctions made by God must not be thought the same with those made by man, we are not to conclude that God admits no differences

where differences are supposed by ourselves. We are evidently in error, if we think that what is great to us must be great to God, and that what is small to us must be small to God: but it is not necessary, in order to the avoiding this error, that we should confound great and small, or compute that in God's sight they must be actually the same. They may not be the same; they may be widely separated: and yet none of them may be great to God, none of them small: whilst, moreover, the divine estimate may be the reverse of the human, great and small changing places, so far as difference is allowed between the two.

It is this latter fact on which we now chiefly wish to fix your attention. Take, for example, our sins. We deny that there can be such a thing as a sin which is small in God's sight; forasmuch as sin, from its very nature, must be of infinite guilt, because committed against an infinite Being. But this is not saying that there are no degrees in sin, as though God regarded all crimes as of

equal enormity. One sin may be greater than another in the Divine estimate, as well as in the human; and yet God may account no sin small, however ready we may be to think this or that inconsiderable. And what we are disposed to reckon trifling, may be precisely that to which God would attach the greater criminality; so that, as we have said, great and small may change places, and where both God and man admit a difference, you may have to reverse the judgment of the one to find that of the other. Sins of the mind, for instance, are ordinarily thought less of than sins of the flesh; pride incurs but slight reproof, whilst sensuality is heavily denounced. Yet the proud, perhaps, offers a more direct insult to God, and more invades his prerogative, than the sensual; and thus his offence may be the more hateful of the two in the sight of the Creator, whilst it receives, comparatively, no blame from the creature. Accordingly, there is nothing of which God speaks with greater loathing than of pride: the proud man is represented as the object of his special aversion. "God resisteth the proud." So that whilst with ourselves he puts a difference between sins, he inverts our decision, and assigns the greater atrociousness where we assign the less. Take, again, covetousness and drunkenness: these sins are neither thought by men, nor represented in Scripture, as of equal enormity. But which do men think the worse? The covetous man escapes with scarce a censure; the drunkard is the object of scorn and reprobation. But is this verdict ratified by the Bible? Nay, whilst the drunkard is unreservedly told that his sin shall exclude him from the kingdom of heaven, the covetous man is identified with the idolater. No one who remembers what idolatry is, and how God denounces the worshipper of images, will hesitate to admit that such a representation places covetousness at the very top of things offensive to our Maker. How careful, then, ought we to be as to what standards we adopt, when we would estimate the relative guiltiness of sins! If we must distinguish sin from sin—though it were perhaps safer to confine ourselves to the truth, that all sin is infinitely heinous—let us take good heed that we always go for our rule to

the Divine word, and not to human opinion.

And much the same may be said in regard of duties, and of actions which God may graciously be pleased to approve. It is not to be thought, that because no human action can deserve reward from God, all actions performed in his service must be of equal account. With virtues, as with vices, God may acknowledge great differences: He will not overlook, as too small for notice, the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple; but he does not necessarily put this act of benevolence on a level with every other achievement of faith and of love. Yet here we have the same remark to make as with reference to sins. The Divine decision will, in many cases, be wholly different from the human; whilst actions are classified by the one as well as by the other, the superiority may be assigned in a contrary order. The act of righteousness, which we should select as most worthy of commendation, and most demonstrative of piety of heart, may not be that on which the Almighty would fix, when signifying his approval of one of his servants. It may rather be, that some sacrifice which the world never knew, some exertion which was limited to his own home, and perhaps even his own heart, has been the most approved thing in the sight of the Lord, of all wrought by one whose time, and substance, and strength, have been wholly devoted to the cause of religion. It may not be when, like Paul, he is fighting "with beasts at Ephesus;" nor when, like Stephen, he is laying down his life for the truth, that a man of God does what specially draws on him the smile of his Maker. There may have been quiet and unobserved moments, moments spent in solitude and prayer, in which he has fought what God accounted a harder battle, and won a nobler victory. And in the arrangements of his household, in meeting some domestic trial, in subduing some unruly passion, he may virtually have displayed a stronger trust, and a simpler preference of the promises of the Most High, than when he has stood forth as the champion and confessor, amid all the excitement of a public scene, and gained for himself a deathless renown. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth:" and mightily should it console those who

are not so circumstanced as to have great opportunity of making efforts and sacrifices on behalf of Christ and his cause, that it is not necessarily the martyr whose self-surrender is most accepted of God, nor the missionary whose labors and endurances are most held in remembrance; but that the private christian, in his struggles with himself, in his mortification of his passions, in the management of his family, in his patience under daily troubles, in his meek boungs for a brighter world, may be yet dearer to his Father in heaven, and be thought to have shown more of faith, than many a man who has entered boldly the desert of heathenism with the cross in his hand, or even ascended the scaffold to seal with his blood his confession of Christ.

Now all these remarks on the different standards by which God and man judge actions, will be found to bear directly on the words of our text. In this 11th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul collects from the histories of patriarchs, and other worthies, instances and examples of the power of faith. And the question, in reference to our foregoing remarks, is whether he has fixed upon those which we should have fixed upon ourselves. Inspired as the Apostle was, so that he must have been directed to facts most worthy of commemoration, we may not doubt that what he takes to show the faith of any one of the patriarchs, must be at least as strong an instance as his history contains. And if the instance selected by the Apostle be not that which we should have selected ourselves—if there be any other which we should have decidedly preferred—it is evident that our judgment differs from that of God; so that we have precisely the case on which we have been speaking, the case in which what man would account best is not so accounted by Him who readeth the heart. But this, we suspect, is exactly what may be alleged in regard of our text. We give you the history of Joseph, a history more than commonly eventful, and which is narrated in Scripture with special minuteness. We set you down to the examining this history, in order that you may take out of it the incident, or the action, which shall most clearly demonstrate that Joseph had faith in God, and that this faith was a principle of great energy and strength. Do you

think that you would make the same selection as St. Paul makes in our text? passing over all the trials of Joseph; all the afflictions which he bravely and meekly endured; his confidence in his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, though on the truth of that interpretation depended his credit, and even his life; his eagerness to receive his father and brethren into the land, though every shepherd was "an abomination unto the Egyptians," and they were but likely to lower him in the general esteem—passing over, we say, all this, and having literally nothing to commemorate of Joseph, save that when he was dying, he "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." Would this, we ask, have been the fact on which an uninspired writer would have fastened, when choosing from the history of Joseph what might best illustrate the Patriarch's faith in God? Hardly, we think,—and if not, then you have a clear exemplification of the truth on which we have endeavored to insist, that the actions which seem to men most conclusive, as evidences of righteousness of character, may not, after all, be those to which God would attach most worth and importance.

It is one thing, however, to allow that the selected proof is not that on which we ourselves should have fixed, and quite another to conclude, that when pointed out, we cannot see its force. We may believe that you all concur with us in the opinion, that had an uninspired writer had to choose the best proof of faith from the history of Joseph, he would not have chosen that selected by St. Paul. But, nevertheless, we may be able to determine that the proof is a strong proof: if we cannot show it to be the strongest which the history furnishes, we may at least ascertain that it establishes the power of the principle which it is quoted to illustrate. This then it is which we must propose as our object through the remainder of our discourse. We have already drawn one valuable inference from the text, in that, through showing that God and men do not always judge alike in regard of righteous acts, it teaches us that the obscure individual, and the unnoticed deed, may be more approved above than the conspicuous leader, and the

dazzling performance. But we have now to examine whether that for which Joseph stands commemorated by St. Paul, did not strikingly demonstrate his faith. We put out of sight the surprising and varied occurrences of the patriarch's life; and standing round his death-bed, we will simply consider whether he did not display extraordinary faith, as we hear him make "mention of the departing of the children of Israel," and give "commandment concerning his bones."

Now who amongst you is unaware of the power which posterity has of attaching men to earth? of the unwillingness felt by those who have every gratification within reach, to submit to any change, or even to contemplate its possibility? It is not necessary, in order to this consciousness, that you should yourselves abound in what the world has to offer, for then there would be comparatively few to whose feelings we might venture to appeal. But you are all judges as to the tendencies of our nature, when acted on by certain causes and circumstances; and you may all therefore decide, from what you have experienced in yourselves, whether, in proportion as temporal advantages accumulate, man is not disposed to settle himself below, and to prefer the present to the future. If I were looking out for strong proof of the power of faith, of faith as dictating that eternal and invisible things be preferred to temporal and visible, I certainly should not go to the hovel, whose wretched inmate has scarce sufficient for subsistence; I should rather turn to the palace where gorgeousness reigns, and all that our nature can desire is lavishly spread. It is not but that the inmate of the hovel has a wide field for the exercise of faith, a far wider, in some respects, than the owner of the palace; but in the particular respect of a preference of the future to the present, of a readiness to give up the visible on the strength of a promise of God, which refers to the invisible, the trial of faith is evidently with the man of abundance, rather than with him whose whole life is a series of struggles. The pauper may be said to have nothing to leave; there is nothing in his portion which can come, even in appearance, into competition with what is promised by God; whereas the noble has to separate from all that is most attractive

in this lower creation, and to exchange a felt good for an unseen and untried. And, therefore, if we found the noble quite indifferent to what he had to abandon, so possessed with a persuasion of the immeasurably greater worth of invisible things, that he was all eagerness to enter on their enjoyment, we should say that here had faith won one of the finest of its triumphs, and that perhaps no where could its display be more conspicuous or convincing.

But it is something of this kind of display which is furnished by the death-bed of Joseph. We do not precisely mean to speak of this death-bed, as though it presented the same facts as that of a Christian, who, with his eye firmly fixed on the glories of heaven, is almost impatient to break away from the possessions of earth. Joseph lived when there were yet but dim notices of a world beyond the grave, and we may not too confidently assume his acquai- with a state of everlasting happiness. But there was every thing to make Joseph desire the settling his children and brethren permanently in Egypt; so that he had somewhat of the same difficulty to overcome in contemplating their removal, as the man who has to resign great present advantages, that he may enter on those promised in another state of being. The scene indeed soon changed: there arose another king "who knew not Joseph," and oppression weighed down the children of Israel. Had this change occurred before Joseph died, there would have been comparatively nothing striking in his making mention of the departure of his posterity, and showing that it occupied his last thoughts upon earth. It would then have been quite natural that he should have desired this departure, and pointed out, with his dying breath, the promise which ensured it, as the most precious of the legacies which he had to bequeath.

But when Joseph died, he was at the very summit of prosperity, scarcely second to the monarch on the throne, with a vast inheritance of honor and wealth to transmit to his children. He had, moreover, established his brethren in the land; so that he, who had been brought into Egypt a captive and an exile, saw himself at the head of a numerous tribe, which seemed growing to a power which scarce another could rival.

I know what, in such a case, would have been the dictate of human policy and ambition. I know what the dying man would have said, had he known nothing, or thought nothing, of the declarations of God, in respect of his family. He would have advised that the colony so successfully planted, should studiously avoid the uprooting itself from so congenial a soil, and take all possible pains to deepen and strengthen its hold. He would have contrasted the mean estate of his race, whilst they sojourned in Canaan, with the wealth and greatness acquired in Egypt, and have argued, from the comparison, that the true wisdom would be to remain where they were, rather than to return to the home of their fathers. You have only to think of Joseph as having risen from the lowest to the highest condition; as the founder, to all appearance, of a mighty dynasty, of a family possessed of almost regal power; and you will readily admit that the thoughts most likely to have occupied his mind were thoughts of the future fortunes of his house, fortunes of which he might augur well if his children continued in Egypt, but which would be altogether perilled by their quitting that country.

And had there not been a higher principle in Joseph than that of worldly policy or ambition; had he been merely a leader who sought aggrandizement and distinction for himself and his posterity; it is not credible that his dying words would have been those which were calculated to unsettle his tribe, and to lead their thoughts from the land where they were most likely to be great. For Joseph might, at the least, have kept silence in regard of the predicted change of residence: if, with the consciousness that God had spoken of a going back to Canaan, he could not have distinctly advised the settling in Egypt, yet whilst there seemed so much to recommend the remaining where they were, he might have abstained from speaking to his children of their being removed.

But Joseph was something more than the founder of a powerful line; and the feelings which actuated him were not those of policy and ambition. Joseph was a man who feared the Lord, and with whom the word of the Most High prevailed against all dictates of carnal wisdom or desire. It was nothing to Joseph that he had wonderfully attain-

ed to lordship over Egypt, and that now, in quitting the world, he seemed to have that lordship to hand down to his children. He knew that God had revealed to his fathers a purpose of giving another laud to them and to their seed; and that it was not in Egypt, fair and fertile though it was, that he designed to carry on the mysterious dispensation which should issue in the redemption of the world. And therefore were Joseph's thoughts on Canaan rather than on Egypt; on Canaan, in which as yet his family possessed nothing but a burial-place, rather than on Egypt, where already they were masters of houses and lands. Oh, my brethren, before you pronounce that there was no great trial or display of faith, in Joseph's making mention, under such circumstances, of the departure of the Israelites, consider the difficulty, experienced by yourselves, in preferring what is future to what is present, in giving up a good, of which you have the possession, for another of which you have only the promise. For it was this which Joseph had to do: and that, moreover, at the least in as great a degree as it ever imposed upon us. You know very well that you find it hard to make up the mind to a separation from objects, sought perhaps with eagerness, and obtained with difficulty; though you profess to believe, that on passing away from earthly possessions, you are to enter upon others a thousand-fold more desirable. And you would perhaps find it yet harder, to make distinct arrangements for the destruction of the fabric which your whole life had been occupied in perfecting, and which, after long trial and struggle, seemed complete in every part, just because there was a saying, referring to a yet remote time, which seemed to pledge God to the building up that fabric in some remote place.

But this was exactly the task assigned to Joseph on his death-bed; and the more you suppose that the patriarch had but little knowledge of heaven and its joys, the more surprising do you make it, that he should have endangered, on the strength of the Divine word, the temporal prosperity of his tribe. For, where eternal sanctions were but dimly revealed, temporal considerations must have had great weight; and the dying leader, who could hardly speak

of afflictions as leading to glory, would be strongly moved to the hiding afflictions, to the leaving them, at least, to be found out by experience. But Joseph was too much penetrated by confidence in the declaration of God, to allow of his conferring with flesh and blood, or being deterred by probable consequences. It is a fine, a noble scene, which is brought before us by the simple record of the historian; and I call upon you to behold it, that you may learn what faith can do against the promptings of nature, the suggestions of suspicion, and the dictates of pride. I know what would be likely to be the uppermost feelings in that expiring man, who, amid all the insignia of authority and wealth, is bidding farewell to brethren and children. I know what he might be expected to do and to say. His wasted features might be lit up with a smile of exultation, as he surveyed the tokens of almost regal state; and he might say to those around, "Behold the glory to which I have raised you, and which I bequeath to you and your posterity. It will be your own fault if this glory decay: the best of all Egypt is yours, if you do not, through indolence or love of change, suffer that it be wrested from your hold. I have made, I leave you great—great as chieftains in an adopted country, forsake not that country, and your greatness may be as permanent as it is dazzling." But nothing of this kind proceeds from the dying man's lips. He speaks only of the abandonment of all the glory and greatness; of an abandonment which might perhaps not be distant; for he gives directions as to his burial in some unpossessed land. Interpret or paraphrase his last words, and they are as though he had said, "Children and brethren, be not deceived by your present prosperity; this is not your home; it is not here, notwithstanding the appearances, that God will to separate and consecrate you to himself. Ye are the descendants of Abraham; and Egypt, with its idols, is no resting-place for such. Ye must be ever on the alert, expecting the signal of departure from a land, whose treasures and glories are but likely to detain you from the high calling designed for you by God. Settle not then yourselves, but be ye always as strangers; strangers where you seem firmly established, and where, by a mar-

vellous concurrence of events, you have risen to dominion."

Such, we say, are virtually the utterances of the expiring patriarch. And when thou think that, by these utterances, he was taking the most effectual way of destroying the structure so surprisingly reared, and on which it were incredible that he did not himself gaze with amazement and delight; that he was detaching those whom he loved from all which, on human calculation, was most fitted to uphold them in glory and power—oh, you may tell me of other demonstrations and workings of that principle, by which servants of the Lord have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions;" but I can see that nothing short of this principle, ay, and of this principle in a very high degree, could have moved the dying man to such words as he spoke; and I assent, in all its breadth, to the statement of St. Paul, that it was "by faith" that "Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel."

But we have not yet spoken of Joseph's giving "commandment concerning his bones;" and this is far too memorable a circumstance to be passed over without special comment. We must refer to the Book of Genesis, in order to see what the commandment was. There you read, "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The oath was remembered and kept; for it is expressly recorded, in the account of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." Neither were these bones neglected in the wilderness: they must have been religiously preserved during all the wanderings of the people; for you read in the Book of Joshua, "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem."

It appears from these historical notices, when joined with the reference made by St. Paul in our text, that great importance is attached by inspired writers to the fact of Joseph's giving commandment concerning his bones. And the fact certainly deserves the being carefully pondered, though you may have

been used to pass it over with but little attention. It would seem that Joseph was never buried in Egypt; for, after mentioning the oath which he took of his brethren, the Book of Genesis concludes with saying, "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." When you connect this statement with his dying injunction, and with the fact, that, though the Israelites were thrust out in haste from the land, they carried with them the remains of the patriarch, you can hardly doubt that the body of Joseph, when embalmed, was kept unburied amongst his people, and that its being so kept was included in his parting injunction. And this is the more remarkable, inasmuch as no reason can be given why Joseph, had he wished it, might not at once have been buried in Canaan. When one reads of his giving "commandment concerning his bones," the obvious feeling is, that, with that desire which seems instinctive to man, the desire that our dust should mingle with that of those whom we have loved and lost, Joseph gave directions for his being laid in the same grave with his father and mother. But had this been all, why was not his body at once carried into Canaan? When Jacob died, "all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house," went up, and interred him, according to his wish, "in the cave of the field of Machpelah." So vast was the funeral pomp, that, "when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan." Surely, if such were the interment of Jacob, that of Joseph would not have been less honored: had he commanded his brethren, as he had been commanded by his father, "In my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me," we may not doubt that the Egyptians would not only have permitted the funeral, but have graced his obsequies with all that could give splendor to death.

It follows, therefore, that it was not merely interment in Canaan which Jo-

seph desired: it was expressly his wish, that the interment should be deferred until the children of Israel departed from Egypt, and that then should his bones be carried up to the land which had been promised to Abraham. In short, the "commandment concerning his bones," which St. Paul adduces in proof of Joseph's faith, would seem to have been a commandment that his bones should lie unburied whilst the Israelites were in Egypt, and be buried when they took possession of Canaan. But what was there in this which specially proved faith? What evidence does the commandment which Joseph gave "concerning his bones," add to that furnished by the mention which he made "of the departing of the children of Israel?" Here is a point worthy of all your attention, though there will be no great difficulty in finding a satisfactory answer.

Why, think ye, did Joseph wish to lie unburied in the midst of his people, except that his bones might perpetually preach to them, that Egypt was not to be their home, but must be abandoned for Canaan? The very lesson which, with his dying breath, he labored to enforce—the lesson, that they were to be expecting to depart from the country which had received and sustained them, this lesson he longed to enforce after death, knowing, as he did, that his brethren and children would be likely to forget it. But how shall he accomplish this? What means are in his power of continuing to preach a great truth, when he shall have been actually withdrawn out of life? Let his bones lie unburied, unburied because they wait the being carried up to Canaan, and will there not be an abiding memento to the Israelites, a standing remembrancer, that, sooner or later, the Lord will effect their removal, and transplant them to the land which He promised to their fathers? It is in this way that we interpret the commandment of Joseph. You have heard of the preaching of a spectre: the spirit that passed before the face of Eliphaz, and caused the hair of his flesh to stand up, came from the invisible world to give emphasis, as well as utterance, to the question, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more just than his Maker?" And here you have, not the preaching of a spectre, but the preaching of a skeleton: the

bones of Joseph are converted into an orator, and make "mention of the departing of the children of Israel." The patriarch could no longer warn and command his brethren and descendants with the voice of a living man: his tongue was mute in death: but there was eloquence in his sepulchred limbs. Wherefore had he not been gathered to his fathers? what meant this strange spectacle in the midst of a people, the spectacle of a corpse to which a grave seemed denied, and which was kept as though by some wild mysterious spell, from going down with others to the chambers of death? It was a dead thing, which nevertheless appeared reluctant to die: it seemed to haunt the earth in its lifelessness, as though it had not finished the office for which it had been born, as though it had yet some awful duty to perform, ere it could be suffered to mingle quietly with the dust whence it sprung. And since it could not fail to be known for what purpose the body of one, so honored and revered, lay unburied year after year—even for that of being removed by the Israelites, when God should visit them, and transplant them from Egypt,—did not Joseph's bones perpetually repeat his dying utterances? and could any thing better have been devised to keep up the remembrance of what his last words had taught, than this his subsistence as a skeleton, when he had long ceased to be numbered with the living?

There can hardly then be two opinions, that the bones of Joseph, thus reserved for interment in Canaan, became virtually a preacher to the people of the very truth which he had died in the effort to enforce. But what additional evidence of his faith was there in his giving "commandment concerning his bones?" The very greatest. It is one thing to preach a doctrine during life: it is another to be eager to preach it after death. See ye not this? see ye not that the faith, which might be strong enough to urge to the advocacy of an opinion now, might not be strong enough to urge to the taking measures for its advocacy a hundred years hence? A man might have his misgivings: he might say to himself, "Perhaps, when I am dead, something will arise to prove me in the wrong; why then should I strive to keep the opinion from being forgotten, when events will have transpired to show it

erroneous? If the opinion be true, others will arise to maintain it; if false, why should my belief in it be made through mine own act, to survive its being exploded? Better surely for me to teach what I think true whilst I live, but not to stake my credit, when dead, on propositions which time may disprove."

We are thus persuaded, that, if you consider attentively, you cannot fail to allow it a strong additional evidence of a man's belief in a tenet, when, over and above proclaiming it whilst he lives, he labors to bring about that he may proclaim it when dead. I would preach, if I might, after death. I would not be silent, if I knew how to speak, when the grave shall have received me, and another shall stand to minister in my place. I would still repeat the truths which I now strive habitually to press on men's attention. But why? Because I am confident of their being truths: because I have no misgivings; because I have not even the shadow of a suspicion, that, happen what may, Christianity can be proved false, and the Bible a fiction. If I had, I should be proportionally reluctant to the preaching after death; my anxiety to utter truth would make me shrink from the possibility of being found hereafter giving utterance to falsehood.

And to show this more clearly by a particular instance, which shall be nearly parallel to that in our text. There are declarations in the Bible, that the Lord, whom the heavens have received, shall come forth personally, in glory and great majesty, and revisit this earth to claim its dominion. There are also predictions as to the time of this splendid manifestation, though not so explicit but that men may widely differ as to when it shall be. Suppose that by the study of unfulfilled prophecy, I satisfy myself as to the date of Christ's coming, fixing it to seventy, or eighty, or a hundred years hence. Suppose that, so long as I live, I keep asserting to you this date, you will conclude that I believe it myself. Suppose that, when I come to die, I gather you around me, and solemnly declare that at the said time the Lord will reappear, you will be more than ever convinced of my belief: dying men have little interest in deceiving; and though you may not be not a jot the more persuaded, that

my opinion is true, there will be scarcely room for doubt as to my sincerity in holding it. But suppose something more: suppose that, as I die, I give directions for the erecting of a monument, to be reared in the very scene of my labors, and inscribed with the very date on which I had so resolutely fixed. I should thus be taking all possible pains to keep my opinion before your eyes, and those of your children; to keep it, when things might have occurred to prove it false, when it might be nothing but a register of my ignorance and mistake: and would not this be the crowning, the unsurpassable evidence of the strength of my faith? If I had the slightest suspicion, or fear, that the event might prove me wrong, would I ever take measures for identifying my name with error and delusion?

And this just illustrates the case of Joseph's giving "commandment concerning his bones." There was no proof, in his giving this commandment, that the children of Israel would depart out of Egypt, even as there would be none in my directions for a monument, that the Redeemer would appear at the specified time. But there was a very strong proof, that Joseph believed that the Israelites would depart out of Egypt, just as there would be that I believed that Christ would come on the day which I had named. And it is simply in illustration of the power of Joseph's faith, that St. Paul quotes his giving "commandment concerning his bones." The illustration is therefore most appropriate. There were long years—as probably Joseph was aware—years of wo and oppression, to pass over Israel ere there would come that visitation of the Lord, which his dying words affirmed. And during this dreary period it would seem to the Israelites as though they were forgotten of their God, as though his promise had come utterly to an end, and they were doomed to remain in the house of bondage for ever. What, then, more likely than that what-ever reminded them of the alleged purpose of God would be treated by them with loathing and scorn; and that, whether it were the dead or the living who predicted their departure, the mention would excite only hatred and derision? Yet Joseph was not to be moved by any of this likelihood. Why not? Because his faith was too strong: he was too confi-

dent in God's word to allow of his taking into account the possibility of its failure. And therefore he did not hesitate to convert his bones into a perpetual preacher, or monument, of that word. "I shall not leave you," he seems to say to his weeping kinsmen. "I die; but this worn body has a high duty to accomplish, ere it may enjoy the still slumber of the grave. I leave it to preach to you that God will yet bring you up from Egypt 'with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm.' You, or your children, may be disposed to insult my remains, when oppression shall grow, and deliverance be deferred. But I know how all this will terminate. Mine eye, over which the film of death is fast gathering, is on a mighty procession, the procession of thousands, and tens of thousands, marching to the inheritance which God promised unto Abraham; and in the midst of this procession shall these bones be triumphantly carried, their office done, to share with you the land of Canaan." Oh! who can fail to see that Joseph thus furnished a far stronger proof of trust in God's word than is found in his mere assertion of what that word declared? Who can deny that St. Paul added vastly to the illustration of the power of faith, when, after stating that "by faith" Joseph, when he died, "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel," he subjoined, "and gave commandment concerning his bones?"

But we ought not to fail to observe, before we quit the death-bed of Joseph, that, forasmuch as unquestionably the Spirit of God actuated the expiring patriarch, and perhaps dictated his words, the commandment as to his bones may have been designed to intimate, or illustrate, the truth of a resurrection. If you suppose, as you reasonably may, that they who surrounded the dying man considered his utterances as suggested by God, you will believe that they pondered them as fraught with information, conveying, probably, notices upon points which had been but dimly, if at all, revealed. We need hardly observe to you, that, so far as the evidence of faith is concerned, it would be most conspicuous and convincing, on the supposition that Joseph had respect to the resurrection of his body. It may have been so. Why was he unwilling that his bones should rest in Egypt? Unwilling he evidently was;

for, allowing him to have desired their remaining unburied that they might remind the Israelites of their predicted departure, this is no reason why he should also have given directions for their being carried into Canaan. By remaining unburied he would have shown an anxiety to preach a great fact to his descendants; but, by further desiring that, when this office was done, he might be buried in the promised land, he evinced a care as to his place of sepulture, or showed that it was not indifferent to him what became of his body.

Wherefore, then, we again ask, was he unwilling to be buried in Egypt? What had he to do with choosing where his bones should be laid, and that, too, on a far distant day? I cannot but infer, from this anxiety of Joseph in regard to his grave, that he did not consider the body as a thing to be thrown aside so soon as the vital principle were extinct. He felt that his dead body might live to admonish his countrymen; but he must also have felt that, even when that office were done, it was not to be treated as of no further worth. It matters not whether it arise from a kind of natural instinct, or from the immediate suggestion of the Spirit of God—in all cases, care as to what becomes of the body, is evidence of a consciousness that the body is not finally to perish at death. He who shows anxiety as to the treatment of his remains shows something of a belief, whether he confess it or not, that these remains are reserved for other purposes and scenes. I can hardly think that Joseph believed that his body would never live again: he would scarcely have provided it a sepulchre in Canaan, if persuaded that, in dying, it would be finally destroyed. His bones might as well have rested in Egypt, amongst those of the idolater and stranger, had they never been appointed, or had he not imagined them appointed, to the being brought up from the dust and again sinewed with life. But on the supposition of a belief, or even the faintest conjecture, of a resurrection, we seem to understand why the dying patriarch longed to sleep in the promised land. "I will not leave," he seems to say, "this body to be disregarded, and trampled on, as though it were merely that of an animal whose existence wholly terminates at death. That which God takes care of, reserving it for another life, it becomes

not man to despise, as though undeserving a thought. And though the eye of the Almighty would be on my dust in Egypt, as in Canaan, yet would I rather rest with the righteous than with the wicked in the grave, with my fathers and my kinsmen, than with the foreigner and the enemy. If I am to start from long and dark slumbers, let those who wake with me be those whom I have loved, and who are to share with me the unknown existence."

Such, we say, is an interpretation which might fairly be put on Joseph's giving "commandment concerning his bones." There may have floated before him visions of the grave giving up its dead. The yearnings of his parting spirit after Canaan; the longing for interment by the side of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; all may have risen from an indistinct thought that he was destined to live again; all may mark that, though life and immortality were not then brought to light, dim and spectral images flitted to and fro, shadowy forms, as of the decayed and the dead, mysteriously reconstructed and reanimated. And if they who stood around Joseph recognized, as they must have done in the last words of Jacob, the dictates of the Almighty himself, then may we say that the "commandment concerning his bones" amounted to a Divine intimation of the truth of a resurrection. Whatever showed that God willed that the dead body should be cared for, that he would not have it thrown aside as utterly done with, went also to the showing that the body was still to be of use, and that, therefore, its resurrection was designed. Hence, it may be that from the death-bed of Joseph sprang, in a measure, that persuasion of a resurrection, which gradually wrought itself into the creed of the children of Israel. His "commandment concerning his bones," kept so long in mind, and associated with a great crisis in the national history, may have produced attention, not only to the departure from Egypt, but to a far mightier departure—the departure of myriads from the sepulchres of the earth, after long enthrallment under a sterner than Pharaoh. I feel as if it were to attach surprising interest to Joseph's last words, to suppose that they showed his own thought, and gave notice to others, of the resurrection of the body. This

makes his death-bed that almost of a Christian. It is not a Christian thing, to die manifesting indifference as to what is done with the body. That body is redeemed: not a particle of its dust but was bought with drops of Christ's precious blood. That body is appointed to a glorious condition: not a particle of the corruptible but what shall put on incorruption; of the mortal that shall not assume immortality. The Christian knows this: it is not the part of a Christian to seem unmindful of this. He may, therefore, as he departs, speak of the place where he would wish to be laid. "Let me sleep," he may say, "with my father and my mother, with my wife and my

children: lay me not here, in this distant land, where my dust cannot mingle with its kindred. I would be chimed to my grave by my own village bell, and have my requiem sung where I was baptized into Christ." Marvel ye at such last words? Wonder ye that one, whose spirit is just entering the separate state, should have this care for the body which he is about to leave to the worms? Nay, he is a believer in Jesus as "the Resurrection and the Life:" this belief prompts his dying words; and it shall have to be said of him, as of Joseph, that "by faith," yea, "by faith," he "gave commandment concerning his bones"

S E R M O N I I .

ANGELS AS REMEMBRANCERS.

"He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words."—ST. LUKE, XXIV. 6, 7, 8.

It was a saying of Luther, and one which is often quoted amongst ourselves, "that the doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine of a standing or a falling church." The meaning of the saying is, that so vitally important, so essential to the very existence of a christian community, is the doctrine of justification by faith, that you may always judge whether a church is in a healthful or a declining condition, by the tenacity with which this doctrine is maintained, and the clearness with which it is expounded. We have no wish to dispute the truth of the saying; for beyond all question, there can be real christianity only where there is a distinct recognition of the fact, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

But, nevertheless, if we were to fix

on any one doctrine, as furnishing pre-eminently a test by which to try the condition of a church, we should be disposed to take that of spiritual influences, rather than that of justification by faith. We cannot but think that he who fails to recognize, in all its freeness, that we are "justified by faith," must first have failed to recognize, in all humility, that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves." It would seem to follow, in natural consequence, from our fancying ourselves independent on supernatural teaching, that we should fancy ourselves capable, in a measure, of contributing to our justification; so that, at all events, he who practically forgets that the Holy Spirit can alone guide into truth, is likely to be soon landed in error on the

fundamental points of a sinner's acceptance. And whether or not the doctrine of spiritual influences be the better test to apply, in attempting to determine the condition of a church, there can, at least, be no doubt that where piety is flourishing, this doctrine will be deeply cherished: where declining, comparatively neglected. The individual christian will "grow in grace," in proportion as he depends on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and habituates himself to the turning to this divine agent for guidance, comfort, and instruction in righteousness. And any branch of the Catholic Church will, in like manner, be vigorous and fruitful, in proportion as it honors the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, distinctly recognizing that his influences alone can make the work of the Second effectual to salvation.

But when we speak of spiritual influence, we are far from wishing to confine the expression to the influences of the Holy Ghost, as though no other spiritual agency were brought to bear upon man. We desire to extend it to created, though invisible, beings—to angels, whether evil or good—believing, on the authority of Scripture, that there are such beings, and that they continually act on us by a secret, but most efficient, power. And where there is a tolerably distinct recognition of the person and office of the Holy Ghost, there may be a comparative forgetfulness, if not an actual denial, of angelic ministrations; and our conviction is, that much of comfort in religion is lost, and much of coldness produced, through the little heed given to spiritual influences, thus more largely understood. It will hardly be denied that the mass of christians think little, if at all, of angels; that they regard them as beings so far removed from companionship with ourselves, that discourse on their nature and occupation must deserve the character of unprofitable speculation. If, then, the preacher take as his theme the burning spirits which surround God's throne, he will probably be considered as adventuring upon mysteries too high for research, whilst there is abundance of more practical topics on which he might enlarge.

Yet it cannot have been intended that we should thus remain ignorant of angels: it cannot be true that there is nothing to be ascertained in regard of these

creatures, or nothing which it is for our instruction, or our comfort, to know. There is a petition in the Lord's Prayer which should teach us better than this—"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It must be specially by angels that God's will is done in heaven; and if we are directed to take the manner, or degree, in which angels do God's will, as measuring that in which we should desire its being done by men, surely it can neither be beyond our power to know any thing of angels, nor unimportant that we study to be wise up to what is written regarding them in the Bible. And, indeed, so far is Scripture from leaving angelic ministrations amongst obscure, or inscrutable, things, that it interweaves it with the most encouraging of its promises, and thus strives, as it were, to force it upon us as a practical and personal truth. Where is the christian that has not been gladdened by words such as these, "Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling?" But of those to whom these words speak cheerfully, how few, perhaps, give attention to the following verse, though evidently explanatory of the agency through which the promise shall be accomplished! "for he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

And it ought not to be overlooked, that, in proportion as we lose sight of the doctrine, that good angels are "ministering spirits," influencing us for righteousness, we are likely to forget the power of our great "adversary, the devil," who, with the hosts under his guidance, continually labors at effecting our destruction. It can hardly be that they, who are keenly alive to their exposure to the assaults of malignant, but invisible, enemies, should be indifferent to the fact of their having on their side the armies of Heaven: good and evil spirits must be considered as antagonists in a struggle for ascendancy over man; and there is, therefore, more than a likelihood, that they who think little of their friends in so high a contest, will depreciate their foes, and thus more than ever expose themselves to their power.

We cannot, then, put from us the opinion that the doctrine of angelic ministra-

tions hardly obtains its due share of attention, and that it ought to be pressed, with greater frequency and urgency, by the ministers of Christ, on those committed to their care. There is, indeed, a risk, that he who sets himself to discourse on those orders of intelligent being which stretch upwards between God and man, may indulge in fanciful speculation, and forget, amid the brilliancies opened up to his imagination, that he is bound exclusively to seek the profit of his hearers. But there is little fear of his passing the limits of what is sober and instructive, so long as he confines himself to what is written in Scripture, and fixes on certain prominent facts which lie beyond dispute, because explicitly revealed. It is this which we purpose doing in our present discourse. We wish, indeed, to impress upon you that a spiritual agency is ever at work on your behalf, understanding by spiritual agency not merely that of the Holy Ghost, to which every other must be necessarily subordinate, but that of those orders of being which are designated in Scripture by the general term "angels," and which kept their "first estate" when numbers of like nature with themselves were cast out from heaven as rebels against God. But, at the same time, we are very anxious to advance nothing which shall not have scriptural warrant for its truth, and which shall not, moreover, present something practical on which you may fasten. Let us see, then, whether the passage which we have taken as our text, will not enable us to illustrate, thus soberly and profitably, the truth, that angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Now you will judge at once, from this introduction to our subject, that we do not purpose speaking on the fact of the resurrection of Christ, though this fact, as matter both of prophecy and history, seems exclusively treated of in the words of our text. What we want you to observe is, that these words were spoken by two angels, who appeared to the women that were early at the sepulchre; for though it is said in the chapter before us, "two men stood by them in shining garments," you readily find, from a comparison of the Gospels, that the human form was here assumed by heavenly beings; that they were spirits who, in

the likeness of flesh, accosted the women as they sought in vain for the body of Christ. It is not here to be proved that there are such beings as angels; neither have we to show that they are endowed with great might; for not only is St. Matthew's description of the apparition of the men, that "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven;" but he adds, "that his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." But assuming, as we safely may, the facts of the ministration and power of angels, there is something very remarkable in the circumstance that the angels, in the case now before us, reminded the women of something which had been said to them by Christ, and that, too, in a remote place, "whilst he was yet with them in Galilee." How came these angels to be so well acquainted with what had been said by Christ to the women? They speak of it with the greatest familiarity, as though they had themselves heard the prediction: they call it to the remembrance of the women, just as one of you might remind his neighbor, or friend, of parts of a sermon at whose delivery both had been present. We do not, indeed, profess to say that the angels might not have been distinctly informed as to what Christ had uttered in Galilee; that they might not have been instructed, by immediate revelation, as to things which had passed when themselves were not present to see or to hear. But neither, on the other hand, can any one say that the angels did not gain their knowledge from having been actually amongst the audience of Christ; whilst the supposition of their having heard for themselves, agrees best with the tone of their address, and is certainly in keeping with other statements of Scripture.

For if we gather, from the familiar manner in which the angels quote Christ's sayings to the women, that they, as well as the women, had been present when those sayings were uttered, we only infer—what may be proved the doctrine of the Bible—that angels are actually, though invisibly, in the midst of our worshipping assemblies, witnesses of our deportment, and hearers of that Gospel to which too often, we give so languid an attention. This would seem to be the doctrine of St. Paul, when he

speaks to the Ephesians of the preaching of the Gospel, as "to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Here the Church, in and through her public ministrations, is represented as furnishing instruction to angelic orders of being, as those lofty creatures came down to her solemn assemblies, not only as observers, but as seeking lessons for themselves in mysteries which, before-time, they had vainly striven to explore. And when the same Apostle exhorts the Corinthian women to have a modest veil, or covering, over their heads, in their religious meetings, he persuades them by this very consideration, that they appeared in the presence of the angels—"because of the angels,"—and thus gives all the sanction of his authority to the opinion, that angels are amongst us when we gather together for public worship.

This, then, is the first conclusion, a conclusion borne out by other statements of Scripture, which we derive from the familiar acquaintance which the angels manifest with what Christ had said to the women in Galilee; namely, that angels are present when the Gospel is preached: angels had in all likelihood been present when the Redeemer announced his death and resurrection; and we may believe that, similarly, as the proclamation of redemption is now solemnly and statedly made, there are other auditors besides those whom our senses can discern; that, like the prophet's servants, we need only the purging and strengthening of our vision, and in addition to the breathing masses of our fellow-men, we shall presently ascertain the place of our assembling to be thronged with burning forms, those stately intelligences which are "the ministers of God," executing his will throughout his vast and replenished dominion. And we need hardly stay to point out to you what an additional solemnity this should cast over these our gatherings in the house of the Lord; for it must commend itself to you all, that the being actually under the observation of the heavenly hosts, the having in the midst of us, as inspectors of what passes, a multitude of glorious creatures, the cherubim and seraphim that are permitted to enter the immediate presence of God himself,

should greatly tend to the banishing from amongst us all that is cold and frivolous and listless, and to the keeping us in that attitude of reverent attention which should be always assumed, yet is often wanting, where men profess to seek an audience of their Maker.

But we wish specially to impress upon you a purpose for which angels may be present at the preaching of the Gospel, and which may be taken as illustrating generally the nature of their ministrations on our behalf. We gather at once, from our Lord's parable of the sower, as expounded by Himself, that Satan busily endeavors to counteract the preaching of the Gospel; for it is said, in explanation of the seed sown by the way-side, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." There is no interpretation to be put upon this, save that the devil is ever watching the effect wrought by the delivery of the word, and that, with an earnestness only equalled by his malice, he labors to thwart it whensoever it threatens to be injurious to his power. And if evil angels be thus present at the preaching of the Gospel, in the hope of making it ineffectual, why should we doubt that good angels are present, to strive to gain it place, and give it impressiveness? Present, we have every assurance that they are; and if we consider that, throughout Scripture, good and evil angels are represented as engaged in a struggle, a struggle for ascendancy over man, we must believe that the efforts of the one are met by precisely antagonist efforts on the part of the others, every mine having its counter-mine; so that if they who are against us labor to catch away the word, they who are for us labor to imprint it, to procure for it a hold and grasp upon the hearers.

And this gives something of a practical and tangible character to that high contest which is going forwards between "principalities and powers." We need not lose ourselves in endeavoring to image the shock of spiritual intelligences, meeting on some field of far distant space, with all the emblazonry of celestial pomp, and in all the terribleness of superhuman strength. It may be thus that poetry loves to dwell on the battles of angels; but theology has ra-

ther to do away with this martial magnificence, to carry the war into the narrow domain of a single human heart, and there to give it the character of a moral conflict, a struggle between principles, supported and pressed by the opposite parties which appear as combatants, and engage in the championship, whether of falsehood or truth. The very place of our present assembling is a scene for the hostile meeting of evil angels and good; and there is not one of you who does not himself furnish a field for that strife between invisible powers, which Scriptural imagery invests with the mysteriousness that belongs to the vast and inscrutable. As the preacher sets before you your sinfulness, and exhorting you to amendment, shows you the provision made by God for your pardon and acceptance, the words which he utters are just as weapons, on which the combatants labor to seize; the evil angels that they may blunt and throw them away, the good that they may thrust them into the understanding, and the conscience, and the heart. But then, let it never be overlooked that we are ourselves answerable for the issue of this struggle; that neither good angels, nor evil, can carry their end, except so far as they have us for auxiliaries. It were of all things the easiest, to make the contest, of which we are the objects, an excuse for our remaining indifferent to the Gospel, pleading that it rested with those who professed to fight our cause, to gain for it admission into the recesses of the soul. But exactly as we are not to "grieve the Holy Spirit," and, in proportion as we grieve Him, must expect his influences to be less powerfully put forth on our behalf, so are we to take heed to second good angels, who can but be instruments which the Holy Spirit employs; and to expect that the Gospel will lay hold on the heart, in proportion as we strive to clear away prejudice, and to receive it with docility and meekness.

And if you want proof how much may be lost through deficiency in that heedfulness which would aid good angels in their endeavors to give effect to the word, it is furnished by what we know of the women whom such angels address in the text. There could apparently have been nothing plainer than the preaching of our blessed Savior, in re-

gard of his own death and resurrection. He announced, in simple, unequivocal terms, that he should be crucified by his enemies, but that on the third day he would rise from the dead; and angels, as it now seems, were present to imprint his words on the minds of the hearers, to prevent their being carried away, as the seed is carried which falls by the way-side. But the followers of the Redeemer had their minds preoccupied by prejudices; they were still looking for a temporal deliverer, and could not tolerate the mention of an ignominious death, for they associated with it the overthrow of long-cherished hopes. Hence, there was no seconding of good angels, but rather a distinct taking part with evil; and consequently the words, which might have been remembered, and could not have been misunderstood, even by a child, appear to have been completely obliterated, so that the hearers remained with as little expectation of what was coming on their Lord, as though he had never forewarned them, or forewarned them only in dubious and mystical terms. When, therefore, the time of trial came, it virtually found them wholly unprepared; and the death of Jesus as actually demolished their hopes as if he had not told them that it should be rapidly followed by his resurrection. The women, who, had they but remembered and believed, might have come to the sepulchre, rejoicing in the assurance that it could not long hold its prey, came weeping and disheartened, bringing with them spices to anoint the body which they supposed would remain an inmate of the grave. And it might well have made them shed tears over their own darkness and unbelief, even in the midst of their gladness at the triumph won over death, that the angels, in proving to them the resurrection, had only to adduce words which should have prevented their seeking "the living among the dead;" that they had simply to say to them, "Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet with you in Galilee."

But now it should be more carefully observed, that this reminding the women of what had been said to them by Christ, is probably but an example of what continually occurs in the ministration of angels. The great object of our discourse is to illustrate this minis-

tration, to give it something of a tangible character; and we gladly seize on the circumstance of the angels recalling to the minds of the women things which had been heard, because it seems to place under a practical point of view what is too generally considered mere useless speculation. And though we do not indeed look for any precise repetition of the scene given in our text, for angels do not now take visible shapes in order to commune with men, we know not why we should not ascribe to angelic ministration facts accurately similar, if not as palpable, proceeding from supernatural agency. We think that we shall be borne out by the experience of every believer in Christ, when we affirm that texts of Scripture are often suddenly and mysteriously brought into the mind; texts which have not perhaps recently engaged our attention, but which are most nicely suited to our circumstances, or which furnish most precisely the material then needed by our wants. There will enter into the spirit of a christian, on whom has fallen some unexpected temptation, a passage of the Bible which is just as a weapon wherewith to foil his assailant; or if it be an unlooked-for difficulty into which he is plunged, the occurring verses will be those best adapted for counsel and guidance; or if it be some fearful trouble with which he is visited, then will there pass through all the chambers of the soul gracious declarations which the inspired writers will seem to have uttered and registered on purpose for himself. And it may be that the christian will observe nothing peculiar in this: there may appear to him nothing but an effort of memory, roused and acted on by the circumstances in which he is placed; and he may consider it as natural, that suitable passages should throng into his mind, as that he should remember an event at the place where he knows it to have happened.

But let him ask himself whether he is not, on the other hand, often conscious of the intrusion into his soul of what is base and defiling? Whether, if he happen to have heard the jeer and the blasphemy, the parody on sacred things, or the insult upon moral, they will not be frequently recurring to his mind? recurring too at moments when there is least to provoke them, and when it had been

most his endeavor to gather round him an atmosphere of what is sacred and pure. And we never scruple to give it as matter of consolation to a christian, harassed by these vile invasions of his soul, that he may justly ascribe them to the agency of the devil: wicked angels inject into the mind the foul and polluting quotation: and there is not necessarily any sin in receiving it, though there must be if we give it entertainment, in place of casting it instantly out. But why should we be so ready to go for explanation to the power of memory, and the force of circumstances, when apposite texts occur to the mind, and then resolve into Satanic agency the profanation of the spirit with what is blasphemous and base? It were far more consistent to admit a spiritual influence in the one case as well as in the other; to suppose, that, if evil angels syllable to the soul what may have been heard or read of revolting and impure, good angels breathe into its recesses the sacred words, not perhaps recently perused, but which apply most accurately to our existing condition. It is expressly said of the devil, that he is "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," as though he not merely had access to their minds, but took up his abode there, that he might carry on, as in a citadel, the war and the stratagem. And if evil angels have such power over the thoughts of men for evil, it seems unreasonable to question that good angels have as great influence over them for good; that they too work in the children of obedience, and are mainly instrumental in calling up and marshalling those solemn processions of sacred remembrances which pass, with silent tread, through the chambers of the spirit, and leave on them the impress of their pureness and power.

We do not wish to draw you away, in the least degree, from the truth, that "the eternal uncreated Spirit of God alone, the Holy Ghost, is the author of our sanctification, the infuser into us of the principle of divine life, and He only is able to overrule our wills, to penetrate the deepest secrets of our hearts, and to rectify our most inward faculties."* But surely it does not infringe the office of the Holy Ghost, to suppose, with Bishop

* Bishop Bull.

Bull, that "good angels may, and often do, as instruments of the Divine goodness, powerfully operate upon our fancies and imaginations, and thereby prompt us to pious thoughts, affections, and actions." They were angels, as you will remember, which came and ministered to our Lord after He had been exposed in the wilderness to extraordinary assaults from the devil. He had the Spirit without measure; but, nevertheless, as though to mark to us the agency which this Spirit is often pleased to employ, it was in and through angels that consolation was imparted; even as, in the dread hour of his last conflict with the powers of darkness, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." And with every admission of the abundant comfort contained in the truth, that a Divine person, even the Holy Ghost, is continually engaged with observing our course, and promoting our welfare, we cannot but feel that it makes this truth more tangible, or brings it more home to our perception, to suppose such beings as angels employed by the Holy Ghost to carry on his work. You know practically what comfort there is in the thought of its being in human form that the Second Person of the Trinity discharges the office of Intercessor: we should be quite lost in approaching Him, were it merely as God that He ministers above; but we are more at home, and we feel greatly assured, in having, so to speak, a created medium, through which to draw nigh.

And what is thus true of the work of intercession, carried on by the Second Person, is true also, in its measure, of the work of sanctification, which appertains specially to the Third. We can better apprehend this work, when we associate with a created though subordinate agency; and that, which might seem vague and indefinite, if referred wholly to one infinite and inapproachable Being, commends itself to us, both as actually going forward, and as beautifully fitted to our weakness and wants, when we know it effected through the instrumentality of creatures higher indeed and far more glorious than ourselves, but nevertheless creatures who have themselves known what moral danger is, and who can therefore rejoice, with ineffable gladness, over one sinner who turns from

the error of his ways. That I cannot see these angels busying themselves with the work of my sanctification, is no more an argument against there being comfort in the fact, than is my not seeing the glorified humanity of Christ, against the encouragement which it gives as to the work of intercession. In both cases I believe that there is a something created, and therefore a something not too far removed from myself, which is engaged in ministrations for my good; and thus, in both cases, there has been a condescension to the weakness of my nature, and God may be said to have come near to me without the blaze of his celestial effulgence, that his terror might not make me afraid. Job, xxxiii. 7.

Not only therefore can I regard it as credible, that angels stir up our torpid memories, and bring truths to our recollection, as they did to the women at the sepulchre of Christ,—I can rejoice in it as fraught with consolation, because showing that a created instrumentality is used by the Holy Ghost in the renewing our nature. And surely it may well excite gladness, that there is around the christian the guardianship of heavenly hosts; that, whilst his pathway is thronged by malignant spirits, whose only effort is to involve him in their everlasting shame, it is also thronged by ministers of grace, who long to have him as their companion in the presence of God; for there is thus what we might almost dare to call a visible array of power on our side, and we may take all that confidence which should result from being actually permitted to look on the antagonists, and to see that there are more with us than there are against. We will not debate whether other and satisfactory solutions may be given of the fact which has furnished our illustration of angelic ministration, but we doubt whether any can be more scriptural; and whilst it agrees so well with their general office, and is so fitted to strengthen us in our pilgrimage, we shall venture to regard angels as God's remembrancers to man. And they may talk to me of the tenacity of memory, and the force of circumstances—the tenacity of memory, which will often hardly serve us from day to day, but lets slip a hundred things which we longed to retain! the force of circumstances, which, ordinarily, save where there

exists great presence of mind, bewilder and perplex, rather than suggest the fitting and appropriate! Yea, they may talk of the tenacity of memory, and the force of circumstances, and think to explain from such elements that recurrence to the mind of suitable texts, that sudden resurrection of forgotten passages of Scripture, at the very moment when they apply with greatest accuracy, which every christian is conscious of in himself, and which he will find exemplified in the experience of others. We have a better way of accounting for the phenomenon; a better, inasmuch as (were there nothing else to be said) it leaves to the aged the consolation of knowing that memory may decay, and yet the Bible not depart from their minds. And who has not seen this exhibited in the aged? The grey-headed christian, when he has almost forgotten even the faces of friends, will yet familiarly quote the sayings of Scripture. We have then, we say, a better way of explaining the phenomenon. We ascribe it to the suggestings of those "ministering spirits," which wait on the "heirs of salvation," that texts and passages of Holy Writ come so mysteriously, but appropriately, into the mind. Oh, it is not the burning and beautiful imagery of poetry alone, which would people the air, and make it melodious with the voices of invisible beings. After all, there is more of real poetry in the facts of theology, than in the finest excursions of the human imagination. I believe, I do not fancy, that there are silent whisperings to the soul from spiritual creatures; the texts which rise up so wonderfully in the hour whether of temptation or of sorrow, as though made for the occasion, are actually the utterances of guardian beings; and if there were more of a demonstration to the senses, than when passages occur to ourselves, I know not why we should think there was a more literal suggestion of truth to the mind, in the scene presented by our text, when angels appearing as men, said to the women that were early at the sepulchre, "Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet with you in Galilee."

But it is hardly possible to read these words of the angels, and not to feel how reproachfully they must have fallen on the ears of the women! how they must

have upbraided them with want of attention and of faith! For had they but listened heedfully to what Christ had said, and had they but given due credence to his words, they would have come in triumph to welcome the living, in place of mournfully with spices to embalm the dead. If it ministered to them gladness, to be told that the Lord had risen, it must have occasioned them sorrow, to be reminded that he himself had foretold his resurrection; so that their presence at the tomb, bearing what they meant to evidence their love, spake of nothing more deeply than of the neglect with which they had treated his words. It was well for these women that they were thus taught their inattention and unbelief whilst it was not too late for repentance and confession. They might have been left to die in their forgetfulness; for there is nothing in their history to show that the strength of memory and the force of circumstances would have brought Christ's words to their remembrance; on the contrary, the empty sepulchre, which you would have thought most likely to recall the words, had nothing but a bewildering effect; for you read, "they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus; and it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments." The circumstances were precisely those which might have been expected to suggest the long-neglected saying, and thus cause the truth to flash upon the mind: yet you see, that had there not been the angelic interference, the women would have had no explanation to give of the disappearance of the body of their Lord. And they might have been left without this interference; suffered to die with Christ's words as witnesses against them, witnesses which would have proved them inexcusable in not knowing that Messiah was to be crucified for sin, but not suffered to see corruption in the grave.

But God dealt more graciously with these women than their inattention, or want of faith, had deserved; he caused the words to be brought to their remembrance, whilst they might yet inspire confidence, though they could hardly fail also to excite bitter contrition. It is often thus with ourselves; the appropriate

text is made to recur to the mind; but whilst we gather from it an abundance of comfort, we are forced to reproach ourselves for having been cast down, or terrified, when God had put such truths upon record as should have left no place for anxiety or doubt. If Christ be wakened from his sleep, through our terror at the storm, he may not only rebuke the winds and the waves, but chide us at the same time as men "of little faith."

May it not, however, be, that, where there has been wilful inattention to the word, there will not always occur this angelic recalling of it to the mind? not, at least, whilst there is yet time for the laying it to heart? We dare not doubt this. And if the remembered words fall reproachfully on the ear, when we may yet make use of them for good, what, alas! shall it be if the words be then only recalled, when there shall no longer be "place for repentance?" Our blessed Saviour Himself, speaking of what shall be the process of judgment at the last dreadful day, makes his word the great accuser of all such as reject him. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." And when with this you connect the part which angels are to take in the awful assize on the whole race of man; for we read that "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just:" that "the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire;"—O terrible thought, that the very beings who now watch over us as friends, good angels, not evil, shall bind up the offending, and cast them into hell!—when, we say, you connect what Christ says of his word, with what He elsewhere says of angels; the word, the condemning thing at the judgment, the angels, the ministers of vengeance; you can hardly question that the office, which celestial beings performed towards the women at the resurrection of Christ, is one which they will yet perform towards multitudes, when the earth and the sea shall have given up their dead. Is it the sensualist who is being carried away into outer darkness? and wherefore is he speechless? The attendant angel hath said, "Remember how he

spake unto you when he was yet with you upon earth; Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." It is the word which judges him, and it is the angel which binds him. Is it the covetous on whom has been passed a sentence against which he has nothing to urge? The angel hath said, "Remember how he spake unto you, Covetousness, which is idolatry." Is it the proud? "Remember how he spake unto you, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the lowly." Is it the careless and the indifferent? "Remember how he spake unto you, What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it the procrastinator, who had deferred the season of repentance? "Remember how he spake unto you, Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

In each and every case the Word may judge, and the angels may bind. O that this were well laid to heart by all in the present assembly! We venture to say that it happens to all of you to have passages of Scripture powerfully brought home to the mind—you know not by what agency, and you cannot, perhaps, account for the sudden intrusion—but there they are; passages which would dissuade you from some pursuit on which you are tempted to enter, or urge you to some duty which you are tempted to neglect. It is the voice of a guardian spirit, that spirit, perhaps, which, in holy baptism, was specially appointed to attend your course, which you should consider that you hear in these whispered passages. Harken ye diligently to this silent voice. Ye resist the Holy Ghost when ye resist the angel that would thus, by adducing Scripture, rebuke you, as the women were rebuked, for seeking "the living amongst the dead," the food of the soul amid the objects of sense. If, when secretly reminded of the truth, ye will give heed, and act forthwith on the suggested lesson—whether it prompt to prayer or to resistance, or to self-denial, or to amendment—we can promise you such assistance from above as shall carry you on towards the kingdom of Heaven. But if ye refuse, and turn a deaf ear, alas! alas! the voice may never again be heard on this side the grave. Yet the words have not perished; the words cannot perish: again, again, shall they find a

voice, but a voice which will be burdened with condemnation; for thus shall it introduce at the judgment the long-neglected sayings, "Remember how he spake unto you, whilst he was yet with you upon earth."

S E R M O N I I I .

THE BURNING OF THE MAGICAL BOOKS.

* Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.—Acts xix. 19.

This occurred at Ephesus, a celebrated city of Asia Minor, which contained that magnificent temple of Diana, which was reckoned amongst the wonders of the world. The Ephesians, it appears, were greatly addicted to the study of curious arts, to magic, sorcery, and judicial astrology, so that "Ephesian letters" became a proverbial expression for cabalistic, or magical, characters. The Gospel, as preached by St. Paul, made great way in Ephesus, and a very flourishing church rewarded his labors. The Ephesians, according to the common course of the Divine dealings, were attacked in the way which their habits and pursuits marked out as most promising. In no place does there seem to have been so great a display of supernatural energy; as though men, much addicted to witchcraft, to the attempting unlawful intercourse with potent but invisible beings, were likely to be most wrought upon by evidence of intimate connection with spiritual agents. You read that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

It must have been very striking to the Ephesian magicians, to find that St. Paul could thus apparently communicate a sort of magical virtue to articles of dress: they were perhaps more likely than men who had never meddled with occult arts, to feel the force of such an evidence of superhuman might. In short, the Ephesians, because accustomed to produce strange results by some species or another of witchcraft, would naturally ascribe miracles to a similar agency; hence, the miracles, which were to serve as their credentials of christianity, required to be more than commonly potent, such as were not in any degree imitable, whether through the dexterity of the juggler, or the incantations of the sorcerer. And it seems to us one of those instances, not the less remarkable because easily overlooked, of the carefulness with which God adapts means to an end, that, in a city in which, of all others, false miracles were likely to abound, and improper arts made the mind familiar with strange phenomena, the powers granted to the preachers of christianity were of extraordinary extent, sufficing to place an apostle at an immeasurable distance from the most consummate magician.

It is, moreover, evident that the hold gained on the Ephesians was gained by and through the demonstration of the superiority of St. Paul's power to that possessed by any dealer in unlawful arts. In the verses which immediately precede our text, you have the account of a sin-

gular occurrence, which appears to have had much to do with the obtaining for christianity a firm footing in Ephesus. You read that certain Jews, who travelled the country as exorcists, persons, that is, who professed to cast out the evil spirits which had then frequent possession of men's bodies, took upon them to employ the name of the Lord Jesus in their endeavors to eject demons, having observed with what success it was used by St. Paul. Amongst others who made the wicked and insolent attempt, for such it surely was, to endeavor to weave a spell from a name which they openly blasphemed, were the "seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew." As though they thought that numbers would give force to the adjuration, these seven appear to have gone together to a man demoniacally possessed, and to have addressed the foul spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. The spirit, however, answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" Thus the demon professed himself ready to submit to Jesus, or Paul, his accredited messenger; but he knew of no right which these exorcists had to dispossess him by the name whose potency he acknowledged. He was not, however, content with thus refusing to be exorcised: he took a signal revenge, causing the man, in whom he dwelt, to put forth supernatural strength, so that he leaped upon the seven men, and overcame them, and forced them to flee "out of the house naked and wounded."

This was quickly noised abroad, and produced, we are told, great effects among both the Jews and Greeks who were dwelling at Ephesus; "and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." To men accustomed to make use of charms and incantations, the evidence thus given of the sacredness of Christ's name, and of the peril of employing it to any but those who believed in his mission, would naturally be very convincing: it was just the sort of evidence which their habits made them most capable of appreciating, and by which therefore they were most likely to be overcome. Accordingly, it seems at once to have taught numbers the necessity of submitting to Christ, and renouncing those arts of magic and sorcery, through which they had perhaps endeavored to hold intercourse with spirits. They acted with

great promptness on the conviction: they laid open all the mysteries of their witchcraft, they "came, and confessed, and showed their deeds;" and then, fired with a holy indignation at the nefarious practices in which they had long indulged, and abhorring the very books which contained the rules and secrets of their arts, they gathered together the curious and costly volumes, and publicly burned them; thus evidencing their sincerity by no trifling sacrifice, for when they counted the price of these books, "they found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

Now there are certain points of view, under which if this conduct of the Ephesians be surveyed, it will appear singularly deserving of being both admired and imitated. We believe of this incident of the burning of the magical books, as of the rest of scriptural history, that it has been "written for our admonition," and ought not to be passed over with a mere cursory notice. We shall accordingly proceed to the endeavoring to extract from it such lessons as there shall seem ground for supposing it intended to furnish.

It is unnecessary for us to inquire what those arts may have been, in which the Ephesians are said to have greatly excelled. There seems no reason for doubting, that, as we have stated already, they were of the nature of magic, sorcery, or witchcraft; though we cannot profess accurately to define what such terms might import. The Ephesians, as some in all ages have done, probably laid claim to intercourse with invisible beings, and professed to derive from that intercourse acquaintance with, and power over, future events. And though the very name of witchcraft be now held in contempt, and the supposition of communion with evil spirits scouted as a fable of what are called the dark ages, we own that we have difficulty in believing, that all which has passed by the names of magic and sorcery may be resolved into sleight of hand, deception, and trick. The visible world and the invisible are in very close contact: there is indeed a veil on our eyes, preventing our gazing on spiritual beings and things; but we doubt not that whatsoever passes upon earth is open to the view of higher and immaterial creatures. And as we are sure that a man of piety and prayer en-

lists good angels on his side, and engages them to perform towards him the ministrations of kindness, we know not why there cannot be such a thing as a man whose wickedness has caused his being abandoned by the Spirit of God, and who, in this his desertion, has thrown open to evil angels the chambers of his soul, and made himself so completely their instrument, that they may use him in the uttering or working strange things, which shall have all the air of prophecy or miracle.

But whatever your opinion be as to the precise nature of sorcery, and the degree to which it might be carried, we may be sure that the books, which the Ephesian converts so resolutely burnt, contained the mysteries of the art, the rules by whose study and application men were to acquire what, at least, might resemble superhuman power and skill. And what we have first to remark on the burning of these books, is that it manifested great detestation of their contents, though hitherto the Ephesians had specially delighted in reading and applying them. There could have been no stronger evidence of the reality of their conversion, than was given by their committing these volumes to the flames. They thus showed a thorough consciousness of the unlawfulness of the arts of which the books treated, and an abhorrence of the practices therein described. And it is always a great sign of the genuineness, the sincerity, of religion, when a man proves that the things, in which he once took delight, are regarded by him with hatred and aversion. It is given as the characteristic of vital christianity, that he in whom it dwells, has become "a new creature." There is nothing which may take the place of this characteristic, or make up for its want. It matters not whether a man can describe the process of his conversion, or fix its exact date: he may have been truly converted, and yet be ignorant how and when it was done. But it is quite indispensable that there should be evidences of moral renewal; light and darkness are not more opposed than the state of the converted and that of the unconverted; and though I may not know the moment or the manner of my being translated from the one to the other, there is more than room for doubting whether I can have been translated at

all, if no change have perceptibly passed on my hopes, desires, and fears. Regenerated in baptism, I may indeed have been "daily renewed,"* and never, therefore, have needed conversion. But if I have ever lived a worldly life, and then hearkened to the dictates of religion, the transition may have been silently and imperceptibly effected, but must be demonstrable from strong contrasts between what I am and what I once was.

We have always therefore to require of men, who, once worldly, now think themselves converted, that they rest content with no evidence but that of a great moral change; not satisfied, because there may have been something of external reform, but searching for proof of such alteration in character, that they hate what they loved, and love what they hated. Such a proof the Ephesians gave, when they burnt their costly treatises on magic. They had been specially addicted to magic; by and through magic they had specially offended God, and periled their souls: so soon, therefore, as Christianity had won its way to their hearts, it was against magic that they showed a holy indignation; it was magic which they proved themselves resolved to abandon. The moral change was thus satisfactorily evidenced: the thing which had been most delighted in was the thing most abhorred; and no proof could be stronger, that the men were new creatures in Christ.

We ask the like proof from those of you who suppose themselves "renewed in the spirit of their mind." Have you burnt your books on magic? We do not accuse you of having, like the Ephesians, practised the arts of the sorcerer: ye have not woven spells, nor muttered incantations. Ye have had nothing to do with the mysteries of enchantment, or with the foul rites of necromancy, dazzling the living or disturbing the dead. But, nevertheless, ye have been in communion with "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air:" ye have submitted to his illusions, and surrendered yourselves to his service. If, in some peculiar sense, the sorcerer or the magician give himself up to the devil, and make himself his instrument, there is a broader sense in which every one of us by nature holds intercourse

* Collect for Christmas-Day.

with fallen angels, and learns from them how to put deceit on others and himself. Yea, and we have our books upon magic. What are half the volumes with which the land is deluged, but volumes which can teach nothing but how to serve the devil better? How numerous the works of an infidel tendency! How yet more numerous those of an immoral! What a shoal of poems and tales, which, though not justly falling under either of these descriptions, can but emasculate the mind of the reader, filling it with fancies and follies, and unfitting it for high thought and solemn investigation. What treatises on the acquisition of wealth, as though money were the one thing needful; what histories of the ambitious and daring, as though human honor deserved our chief aspirations; what pictures of pleasure, as though earthly gratifications could satisfy our longings.

And if we have our books upon magic, have we not also the scenes and places where fallen spirits may be declared the presiding deities?—the crowded mart, where mammon is almost literally worshipped; the gorgeous theatre, where the very air is that of voluptuousness; the more secret haunts of licentiousness; the mirthful gatherings, where the great object is to forget God; the philosophical, where the chief endeavor is to extol man. Indeed it must not be said that there is nothing of witchcraft going on around us. The question of the Apostle to the Galatians has lost none of its force: "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Nay, not only may every unconverted man be declared, in some great sense, under the influence of sorcery: he may be said to practise sorcery; for he is instrumental, whether by his precept or his example, to the seducing others into sin, and confirming their attachment to the world.

We may, then, almost literally bring him, if he think himself converted, to the test furnished by the conflagration of which we read in our text. We ask him whether he feels, and manifests a righteous indignation against those practices and pursuits which at one time engrossed his affections? Whatever may have been his peculiar and besetting sin, is it that sin against which he specially guards? is it that sin which he visits

with the most thorough hatred? It is comparatively nothing that he is vigilant and wrathful against other sins—is he vigilant and wrathful against the favorite sin? The Ephesians directed their indignation against magic; and it was magic to which the Ephesians had been specially prone. Have we proceeded on the same principle? One man is specially acted on by the love of wealth: is it the love of wealth against which religion has made him specially earnest? Another is more disposed to the pursuit of honor: is it ambition against which religion has most roused his zeal? A third is most easily overcome by his bodily appetites: is it his grand effort, as instructed by christianity, to crucify "the flesh, with the affections and lusts?" We can take no lesser proof of sincerity: the fire must be made with the books of our own particular art, otherwise we may burn library upon library, and yet furnish no evidence of conversion.

And in this respect, even had we no other to allege, the conduct of the Ephesians reads a great lesson to the men of every age. They publicly showed that they hated and abjured the sin which they were publicly known to have most loved and practised. It was the vehement protest of the covetous man against covetousness; of the licentious against licentiousness; of the ambitious against ambition. It was not the protest of the covetous against licentiousness; nor of the licentious against ambition. There is ordinarily little difficulty in gaining such a protest as that. But it was the protest of the awakened sinner against his own chosen form of sin; and thousands are ready to protest against all but their own, to give up any other, on the single condition of keeping what they love best. Therefore, judge ye yourselves, we again say, by your likeness to the Ephesians. Ye have tampered, in one sense, like them, with sorcery. Ye have gone down to the cave of the enchantress, and ye have drunk of that cup by which the tempter hopes to steal away men's faculties. Ye had your books in which ye have studied magic—whether the magic by which the metal and the jewel may be made to flow into your coffers; or that by which ye may wreath the brow with laurel; or that by which ye may fasci-

nate the senses, and make life one round of luxurious enjoyment. But ye now think that religion has hold upon you, and that ye are no longer what ye were. And heartily do we trust that you are right in your opinion, and that there is no self-deceit. But this we must tell you—if ye be, indeed, converted, the evidence of the conversion will be in the manifested abhorrence, not only generally of sin, but especially of that sin in which you most indulged—oh, you will virtually do what was done by the Ephesians, who, because they had peculiarly provoked God by the practising curious arts, were no sooner led to a true belief in Christ, than they “brought their books together, and burned them before all men.”

It would, however, be inferring comparatively very little from this action of the Ephesians, were we to regard it only as expressing their detestation of their favorite sin. We may justly suppose that they had their safety in view, when throwing into the flames the treatises on magic. They might have publicly renounced the arts which they had been accustomed to practise, without burning the rare volumes which had initiated them into their mysteries. They might have shut up these volumes, retaining them as mere literary curiosities, though resolving never again to refer to them for instruction in witchcraft. But there would have been a want of christian prudence in this; this would have kept them continually exposed to temptation; and it was in their not doing this, that we count them greatly worthy of being admired and imitated. It is very clear that, had they not destroyed their treatises on magic, there would always have been a risk of their returning to their study: it was not unlikely that, so soon as the first heat of religion had passed, they would again have taken up the curious books, and read them for recreation, if not for instruction. We do not necessarily suppose that they would have turned to them with any design of resuming unlawful practices; but they might have perused them as a singular species of literature, from which entertainment might be drawn, without any surrender of the persuasion that they taught only what was foul and unhallowed.

Yet any such intention of making any

use whatever of the books, would have shown a sort of lurking affection for what they contained, and could not, at least, have been carried into effect without risk of the being seduced back into the practice of sorcery. The Ephesians, therefore, wisely determined to put themselves out of the way of temptation; and this, you observe, they effectually did by burning their books; for, in all probability, those books were not to be replaced, even had they wished for them again; there was then no printing-press, that mighty engine for multiplying evil as well as good. Thus they cut themselves off, in a very high degree, from the possibility of returning to their divinations and enchantments: they showed a wholesome distrust of their own strength and resolution, and proved that, with real christian prudence, they thought it better to shun than to brave moral peril.

And herein did they become a great example to ourselves. We have to require of those of you who have broken away from the enchantments and fascinations of the world, that they show a like zeal in avoiding the scenes and occasions of temptation. It is not christian courage, it is nothing better than presumption, when a man unnecessarily exposes himself to spiritual danger, as though counting himself proof against assault, and not again to be entangled in things once abandoned. When we are brought into temptation, by walking the clear path of duty, we have the best reason to expect such assistance from above as shall enable us to hold fast our integrity. But if we be not in the clear path of duty when we meet the temptation; if it be through our own choice or hardihood that our constancy is endangered; there is great probability that God will suffer us to fall, if only to teach us our feebleness, and our need of stronger caution for the future. God permitted not the fire to singe a hair of the heads of the three Jewish youths, who preferred the being cast into a furnace to the worshipping an idol; but had they presumptuously thrown themselves into the flames, in place of having been enveloped in them for the maintenance of truth, do you think that the like miracle would have been wrought on their behalf? And similarly with the Ephesians, it might happen to them, that books on magic would fall in their way, and that they

would be tempted to peruse their unhal-
lowed pages. But they would have had
nothing to do with the causing this tempta-
tion, and might, therefore, expect to be
strengthened to withstand it. But if, on
the other hand, they had kept themselves
in the way of temptation by preserving
the treatises, they would have had only
themselves to blame, if, as in all likelihood
it would have happened, they had been
drawn back to the study, and perhaps
even the practice, of unlawful arts.

Here, therefore, we have again to ply
the professing christians amongst you
with the question, have ye burnt your
books on magic? Ye will readily under-
stand the precise force of the question,
as addressed to yourselves, and how it
must be modified to meet a difference in
circumstances. As we before said, ye
have had nothing to do with the arts of
the sorcerer, in the sense in which those
arts were practised by the Ephesians.
But nevertheless ye have lived in a very
atmosphere of witchery; the spell has
been woven over you and around you;
the gorgeous phantoms, the brilliant
shadows, with which evil spirits people
the world, "beguiling unstable souls,"
these once dazzled and allured you,
though now the illusion is broken, and ye
have resolved to walk henceforward by
the light of God's word. And what have
ye done in regard of sources and occa-
sions of temptation? upon what princi-
ple have you acted with respect to books,
and scenes, and practices, which expe-
rience has identified with the artifices of
that great deceiver, who once had you
altogether in his power? It may be
that one of you was half inclined to infi-
delity: he read sceptical books, whose
assertions he could not disprove, and
whose sophistries he could not unravel
—he was magician enough to conjure
up doubts, but wanted the wand of truth
wherewith to disperse them. Christian-
ity, however, has been presented to him
with that overcoming evidence which it
wears, when preached with "demonstra-
tion of the Spirit and of power;" and he
has put away all unbelief, and cordially
admitted the Gospel as a message from
God. But what has he done with the
magical books, with the treatises which
entangled him in the maze of infidelity?
There is such a thing as preserving, yea,
as reading a book from a literary motive,
when it is held in abhorrence on every

other account. The book may be very
rare, or very eloquent; it may be valuable
for its style, or for information which it
contains, though unhappily fraught with
Deistical principles. And the man, on
whom the book once acted like an in-
itiation into sorcery, forcing him into a
region of wild cloud and shadow, will,
perhaps, when he has shaken off scepti-
cism, study the book afresh, because re-
lishing its beauty of diction, or wishing
to show himself proof against its false-
hoods. Ah! he had better have imitated
the Ephesians: he is fearfully and un-
necessarily endangering his faith: he
should rather have burnt the book on
magic; he should have done, we mean,
his best to put, or to keep, the dangerous
volume out of reach.

It may be that another of you has
lived much in vice, submitting himself
to the tyranny of his passions, and walk-
ing within the circles of what is falsely
called pleasure. And in this his sensual
career he has, perhaps, been often excited
to fresh indulgence by the licentious writ-
ings of poets, men who have prostituted
all the graces of song to the service of
impurity. It is one of the foulest and
most melancholy of facts, that writers of
extraordinary genius, not to be surpass-
ed in the play of imagination and the
power of language, have desecrated their
talents to the adorning debauchery, to the
throwing a grace and a beauty over the
abominations of vice. And it must be a
fatal and a standing reproach on our liter-
ature, that it contains volumes which are
almost unrivalled in the mere article of
composition, rich in the splendor of dic-
tion, the brilliancy of metaphor, and the
pathos of description, but which put all
modesty to the blush, and but few frag-
ments of which can we venture to place
in the hands of our children. These de-
serve to be called the treatises on magic,
when it is the wand of pleasure which evil
spirits wave. It is beyond calculation
what an amount of viciousness is fostered
in a land, through the circulation of loose,
but beautiful, poetry. We speak not of
publications which can be only sold in
secret, and the venders of which have
only to become known to be punished
by law. We speak of those to which no
such open stigma is attached, but which
are, nevertheless, as instrumental to the
fanning base passions, and encouraging
licentiousness, as the more indecent and

scandalous, which draw upon themselves judicial condemnation. There is many a young person who would shrink from gross writings with a sort of instinctive abhorrence, but who is not proof against the seductions of voluptuous poetry, and to whom, therefore, the elegant author, who can clothe immorality in a fascinating dress, will serve as a sort of High Priest of vice, though he might have been disgusted by any of its less polished ministers.

But our question now is, what does the sensualist do with the magical books, when convinced, by the urgency of christianity, of the duty of living "soberly, righteously, and godly in the world?" Is there not much, even amongst those who profess an utter abhorrence of licentiousness, of retaining, and reading, for the sake of their exquisite poetry, works confessedly immoral in their tendency? Are not the graces of composition accepted in apology for the deficiencies in principle? Does not many a man tolerate, yea, even enjoy, books which, in a religious point of view, he utterly repudiates, because they contain passages of unexampled sublimity, or flash throughout with the coruscations of genius? We have only to say upon this, that the Ephesians acted more nobly, and more wisely. The man, who has once been the slave of his passions, and who has found those passions excited by voluptuous writings, ought never again to open the volumes, as though he might now gather the beauties of poesy without imbibing the sentiments of impurity: the volumes ought to be to him, as if the only copies had been consumed in the flames—the Ephesians should be his pattern, who not merely abjured what they had learnt to be wrong, but did their utmost to keep themselves out of reach, for the future, of the temptations by which they had been overcome.

And, without confining ourselves to the precise case of books, what is your course generally in regard of occasions of sin, of places and occupations which you have found detrimental to religion? Do you make a point of shunning what you have discovered to be injurious? or do you venture on a repetition, in the confidence of being too strong to be again injured? The associates who encouraged you in sin, whilst careless of the soul—have you given them up, now that

you are anxious for the soul? or do you act on the supposition, that there is no further fear of your being carried away by the force of companionship? You found that worldly amusements—the theatre, with its licentious accompaniments; the masquerade and the dance, with their frivolity at least, if not their sinfulness; the card-table, with its trial of temper, even where it did not excite the spirit of gambling—you found that these warred against the soul, whilst you were yet unconverted; but what have you done as a proof and result of conversion? Have you striven, to the best of your power, to place barriers between yourselves and these amusements? or are you still partaking of them, only in less measure, and with a diminished affection?

Or, once more, if it were for wealth that you had dealings with the sorcerer, dedicating every moment and energy to the arts by which gold may be multiplied, how have you acted since the grace of God, as you think, brought you to love and seek everlasting treasures? Have you put from you what was too engrossing in occupation? or are you still engaged as ever in the witchcraft of money-making?

You can hardly fail to understand the drift of these questions. The thing which we wish impressed upon you is, that, whatever may have been your dominant passion before conversion, your great effort, in proof of conversion, should be the cutting yourselves off from temptations to the gratifying that passion. We care not what enchantment you most practised; or by what you were most beguiled: your endeavor should be, to keep yourselves as much as possible out of the sphere of that enchantment; not exposing yourselves to its influence, as though its power were gone, but placing yourselves beyond its reach, as though your weakness remained. And if ever we see a man, who has been delivered from the meshes of infidelity, still fond of studying sceptical writings; or another, who has been won from licentiousness, adventuring into the haunts of dissipation; or a third, whose idol was gold, taking no pains to withdraw from the atmosphere of covetousness; or a fourth, whom evil companions had seduced, braving the charm of old association—oh, we cannot but greatly fear

for such a man, that his contempt of danger will make him its victim; that, by not detaching himself at once from occasions and scenes of temptation, he has but insured relapses and backslidings; we can but desire that he had taken the Ephesians as his model, who no sooner renounced magic, than, as though fearful of being again entangled in its study, and distrusting themselves while they had access to its rules, "brought their books together, and burned them before all men."

But there is yet another point of view under which we may survey the conduct of the Ephesians, and find in it a test of the genuineness of conversion. We have spoken of the burning of the magical books as proving detestation of a favorite sin, and earnestness in avoiding the being again tempted to its commission. But we may allow that other ways might have been found in which to express abhorrence of sorcery; and that, perhaps, some of the Ephesians might have retained the books in their possession, without much risk of resuming the unlawful studies. Yet if equal detestation might have been otherwise shown, and if no personal risk whatsoever had been run, we should still have to applaud, and point out for imitation, that action of the Ephesians which stands recorded in our text. So long as the books were preserved, there was of course no security against their falling into the hands of unstable persons, who would be tempted by them to the engaging in the trade of the magician. But by actually destroying the books, the most effectual means were taken to prevent the spread of the study of sorcery; for as we have already remarked, there was then no printing-press to multiply indefinitely the copies of a work. The books must have been manuscripts, produced with great care, and procured at large cost. In our own day, indeed, very little would in most cases be gained by the burning our copy of an improper book. We should not thereby necessarily do much, if any thing, towards preventing the work from finding its way into the possession of others. But it was very different, as you must all perceive, before the invention of printing; and it is highly probable that the christian converts could have done nothing more instrumental to the suppression of magic in Ephesus, than

the consigning to the flames the books on curious arts which they respectively owned. It was going far towards destroying the grammars and dictionaries of the cabalistic language, and thus leaving those, who might wish to learn witchcraft, deprived of the common means of ascertaining its elements. And we suppose, accordingly, that the Ephesians were greatly actuated by this motive: it was not enough for them, either that they had themselves adjured magic, or were not themselves likely to be again injured by the books: they had respect to the welfare of others; and feeling that this welfare might be endangered by the magical volumes, they threw without reserve those volumes into the flames, though their price, when counted, was found to be "fifty thousand pieces of silver."

And here we have again to declare the Ephesians an example, and to ply you with the question, Have you, from the like motive, burnt your books on magic? There is no better test of the genuineness of conversion, than earnestness in seeking the conversion of others. It cannot be that a man has been brought to a sense of his sinfulness, of the danger to which as a sinner he is exposed, and of the provision made by Christ for his deliverance, and yet is indifferent to the condition of those who live "without hope, and without God in the world." There is the widest possible separation between vital christianity and whatsoever has alliance with selfishness; vital christianity is a generous, expansive thing: the man of the world may be willing to keep earthly riches to himself; the man of God must be anxious to communicate heavenly to others. In spiritual things, anxiety does not terminate with the securing our own safety: it is rapidly transferred to others; and when humbly confident of being "begotten again to a lively hope," we shall be painfully solicitous to make those around us fellow-heirs of the promise. One of the strongest feelings in the converted man, is that the great things done for him by God bind him to attempt great things in return: as he looks upon those who still sit "in darkness and the shadow of death," the light with which he has been visited, will seem to him given on purpose to be diffused.

The Ephesians, as we think, quite sat-

ished this test of conversion when they burnt their magical books. It was the action by which, as we have shown you, more was done than could perhaps have else been achieved, towards preventing others from engaging in practices which themselves had found most pernicious. So that the flames, in which they consumed their treatises on witchcraft, were the best tokens of the ardency of their love for the souls of their fellow-men. Have you given any thing of a like token? Where are your books upon magic? What have you done towards keeping others from the sins to whose commission you were yourselves most addicted? For what has been most injurious to yourselves, you will naturally feel likely to be most injurious to others, and it will therefore be that against which you will most strive to put others on their guard. The man, once tinctured with infidelity, will be zealous in suppressing sceptical writings, and diffusing their refutation. The man who has lived in licentiousness, will be so earnest in nothing as in discountenancing vice and promoting morality. The man who was injured by bad company, will do all in his power to keep the unwary from evil associations. The man who has experienced the hurtfulness of public amusements, will be urgent against places and diversions which he found full of peril. The man who was likely to have been ruined through covetousness, will warn others, above all things, against the love of money. And in these or similar cases, the thing done is precisely what was done by the Ephesians: the books on magic are burnt, with the distinct view of keeping others from practising magic: individuals do their best to put down or obstruct that particular form of evil which proved most entangling and detrimental to themselves.

Let those of you who think themselves converted, try by this test the genuineness of their conversion. Each must well know the sin to which he was most inclined, and by which his salvation was most endangered; is he, then, all anxiety to keep others from that sin, and to remove from them temptations to its commission? The converted man is not only desirous to prevent sin in general; he is specially desirous to prevent that sin which was once his besetting sin;

to guard men against it and to cut off its occasions. This is what we call burning the books on magic—the acting with the set design of withholding others from what has been peculiarly hurtful to ourselves. And if the man who was injured by sceptical writings manifest no special zeal against infidelity; or if he, who was in bondage to the lusts of the flesh, be not foremost in opposing licentiousness; or if another, who had almost shipwrecked himself for eternity in the theatre, or at the gaming-table, be not energetic in withdrawing others from haunts of dissipation; or generally, if an individual, who was all but lost through living in a certain sin, take no earnest measures for preventing those around him from committing that sin; oh, we are bound to fear for such a man, that he does but deceive himself, when thinking that he has undergone a great moral change; and we must urge upon him the comparing himself with the Ephesians of old, who were no sooner brought to faith in the Savior, than, animated with desire to suppress the arts which had endangered their souls, they collected their books, and threw them into the flames, though, when the price of them was counted, “they found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Our concluding remarks on the burning the treatises on sorcery, will be of a somewhat different texture from the foregoing. The epistle which St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about four years after this event, is among the most beautiful and valuable portions of the New Testament.* It is not, as is the Epistle to the Romans, or that to the Hebrews, a great controversial treatise; it is a letter to those who, having been well initiated into christianity, and grounded in its fundamental principles, might be conducted to its more secret depths, or admitted into acquaintance with its profounder mysteries. There is, perhaps, no part of the writings of St. Paul, in which the elements of christian truth are more assumed as placed beyond controversy, and in which, therefore, the Apostle seems to feel more at liberty to descend on sublime things, and unfold glorious wonders. If it be lawful, in speaking of Scripture, to draw such a distinction, we should say that the

*Knox's Correspondence.

Epistle to the Ephesians is among the most spiritual of the inspired writings, throwing open, in an uncommon degree, the very recesses of the Gospel, and presenting such heights of christian doctrine as, after all our soarings, still lose themselves in the clouds.

And it has been justly pointed out, as singularly worthy of observation, that it was to men who had burnt their books on curious arts that an epistle was indited, so replete with what is most wonderful, most beautiful, most profound, in christianity. If you will allow us the expression, it was like repaying them in kind. The Ephesians had abandoned the mysteries of sorcery and astrology : at the bidding of the Apostle they had renounced unhallowed modes of prying into the secrets of the invisible world ; and they were recompensed by being led to the innermost shrines of truth, and permitted to behold glories which were veiled from common gaze. They gave up the astrology, which is busied with stars that shall be quenched, and lo, "the Sun of righteousness" rose on them with extraordinary effulgence ; they renounced the magic which would con-

jure up strange forms, and a rod, like that of Moses, was stretched forth, peopling the whole universe with images of splendor ; they abjured the necromancy, which sought to extort from the dead revelations of the future, and the very grave became luminous, and its ashes glowed for them with immortality.

Learn ye from this, that ye cannot give up any thing for God, and he loses by the surrender. The loss is always far more than made up, and, perhaps, often by the communication of something which resembles, whilst it immeasurably excels, what you part with. Never stay, then, to compute the cost : the Ephesians do not seem to have computed it before they burnt their books, though they computed it after—and then, not in regret, but only to display the triumph of the Gospel. Let the cost be " fifty thousand pieces of silver : " hesitate not to make the sacrifice for God, and you shall find yourselves a hundred-fold recompensed : like the Ephesians, if you forsake magic, because God hath forbidden it, ye shall be initiated into mysteries which the Holy Spirit alone can reveal.

S E R M O N I V .

THE PARTING HYMN.

" And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives."—MATTHEW XXVI. 30.

These words refer, as you are probably all aware, to the conclusion of our Lord's last supper with his disciples, when, having instituted a sacrament which was to take the place of the Passover, he went forth to meet the sufferings through which the world should be redeemed. The evangelist St. John

does not give any account of the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but he records sundry most important discourses which Christ delivered at this time to his afflicted disciples. It is probable that a portion of these discourses was uttered immediately after the institution of the Sacrament, and

before our Lord quitted the chamber in which he had supped with his followers. The remainder are generally thought to have been delivered on the Mount of Olives, to which Christ first went, as is stated in our text, and from which, as the night advanced, he retired with Peter, and James, and John, to Gethsemane, that he might undergo mysterious agony, and meet in dread conflict the powers of darkness. But, to whatever times and places we may affix the several discourses preserved by St. John, there is every reason to think that our text relates the last thing which occurred in the room where the supper had been eaten; that, so soon as the hymn, or psalm, had been sung, our Lord left the room, that he might give himself to the enemies who thirsted for his blood. Opportunity may have been afterwards found of fortifying still further the minds of the disciples; but we are to consider that the singing of the hymn was the last thing done at Christ's last supper, and that, this having been done, the blessed Redeemer, as one who knew that his hour was come, forthwith departed to suffer and to die.

And what was the hymn, or psalm, chanted at so fearful and melancholy a moment? There is no reason to think that our Lord swerved from the custom of the Jews; he had commemorated the Passover as it was then wont to be commemorated by his countrymen; and we may justly, therefore, conclude that he sung what they were used to sing in finishing the solemn celebration. When the Passover was instituted, on the eventful night of the destruction of the first-born of the Egyptians, various forms and practices were enjoined, as you find related in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus. But in after-times, especially in those of our Savior, when traditions had come to their height, numerous circumstances were added to the celebration, so that the original rites formed but a small part of what were practised by the Jews.* And learned men have well observed that the New Testament, in several places, refers to certain of these additional circumstances, leaving us to infer that Christ commemorated the Passover as it was then ordinarily commemorated, without rejecting such customs

as could not distinctly plead the authority of the law. Thus, for example, at the first Passover in Egypt, the strict injunction had been, that they should eat it "with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, their staves in their hands, and in haste." The posture enjoined and practised corresponded accurately with their condition, that of men about to be thrust forth from the country, and to enter on a toilsome and difficult march. But afterwards the Jews altered the posture, that it might answer better to their altered circumstances. At their common meals the Jews either sat, as we do, with their bodies erect, or reclined on couches, with the left elbow on the table. But on the Passover night they considered themselves obliged to use the recumbent position, because it marked, as they thought, their freedom and composure. Now it is evident, that in this our Lord conformed to the custom of the Jews: the beloved disciple, John, leant on his bosom during the repast, from which we infer, at once, that Christ and his Apostles reclined in the eating the Passover.

To give another instance. The eating of unleavened bread at this time was enjoined by a special and express command, which you find in the Book of Exodus; but nothing is there said as to the use of wine at the Passover. Subsequently, however, the drinking wine at the Passover came to be considered as indispensable as the eating the unleavened bread. We find it expressly stated by the Rabbinical writers, that "the poorest man in Israel was bound to drink off four cups of wine this night, yea, though he lived of the alms-basket." Now it is very clear that our Lord and his disciples made use of wine at the Passover: nay, Christ may be said to have given a direct sanction to what might have been regarded as the innovation of tradition; for he took the cup which men had introduced into the paschal supper, and consecrated it in perpetual memorial of his own precious blood. In like manner, with regard to the singing of a psalm or hymn—there is nothing said in the Book of Exodus as to the concluding the paschal supper with any such act, yet the custom was introduced in process of time, and the Jews made a point of singing the hundred and thirteenth and the five following Psalms, Psalms which are said to have been selected, not only because

* See Lightfoot on the celebration of the Passover.

containing, in the general, high and eminent memorials of God's goodness and deliverance unto Israel, but because they record these five great things, "the coming out of Egypt, the dividing of the sea, the giving of the law, the resurrection of the dead, and the lot of Messias." These psalms were repeated, or chanted, on other occasions besides that of the Passover—as at the feast of Pentecost, and on the eight days of the feast of Dedication. But at no time was their use more strictly observed than on the night of the Passover, though they were not then all sung at once, but rather dispersed over the service; only so that, when the last cup of wine was filled, the concluding psalms were sung; and thus the solemnities terminated with the chant, "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." As we are expressly told that Christ concluded the Passover with a psalm or hymn, we cannot well doubt, that, having conformed in other respects to the existing customs of the Jews, he conformed also in this; and that, consequently, the words which he sung with his disciples were the words then ordinarily used in the solemn commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt. We shall assume this through the remainder of our discourse; so that if, over and above the fact of a hymn having been sung, we have occasion to refer to the subject-matter of the hymn, we shall turn to the psalms which constituted what the Jews called the Hallel, from the repetition of the word "Halleljah," and seek in them for the expressions which were woven into the anthem of our Lord and his Apostles.

There are many truths which present themselves to the mind, when it duly ponders the simple statement of the text. Our foregoing remarks, bearing merely on the fact that Christ conformed to the innovations of the Jews, will only help us to the making one use, though an important one, of the passage. We shall find, however, as we proceed, that what we may have been used to pass by, as the bare announcement of a fact but little interesting to ourselves, is fraught with rich and varied instruction. Let us then employ ourselves without anticipating any further the lessons to be extracted, in considering whether, as with all other

Scripture, it were not for our admonition and instruction in righteousness, that the sacred historian, having given us the account of the last supper, was directed to record of Christ and his Apostles, that "when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."

Now the first important truth on which we would speak, as enforced or illustrated by the passage under review, is that to which our introductory remarks have all tended, that our blessed Lord, by conforming to certain customs of the Jews in the eating of the Passover, gave his sanction to ceremonies which may not be able to plead a divine institution. We have shown you that it was not only in the singing of psalms, but in many other particulars, such as the recumbent posture, and the drinking of wine, that the Jews had altered, or added to, the original practice, but that our Savior made no objection to the alteration or addition. He celebrated the Passover just as he found it then used to be celebrated, submitting, so to speak, to tradition and custom. And yet, had there been any thing of a captious spirit, there might perhaps have been matter for doubt or disputation. It might have been urged, with some show of justice, that the innovations were not necessarily in keeping with the character of the ordinance; that the recumbent posture, for example, and the drinking of wine, as betokening, or according with, security and gladness, scarcely suited the commemoration of events which had been marked by hurry, agitation, and alarm. And with regard even to the singing of psalms—if it had been admitted that the occasion was one which would well warrant the praising God with loud anthems, it might still have been asked, Why use these particular psalms? Have we not the Song of Miriam, which, as composed immediately after the deliverance from Egypt, would be far more appropriate? or have we not the song of Moses? and would not the song of the leader, through whom the Passover was instituted, and the emancipation achieved, remind us better of what we owe to God, than the words of one who lived long after the recorded events, when we were settled as a nation, and not wanderers in the desert?

We think there would have been no difficulty in thus making out, so to speak, a sort of plausible case against the in-

novations of the Jews in the Passover service. Had our Lord been a leader, disposed to make ceremonies the occasion of schism, he might have armed himself with very specious objections, and have urged that there were conscientious grounds for separating from the communion of the national church. But it is evident that our blessed Savior acknowledged a power in the church of decreeing rites and ceremonies, and of changing those rites and ceremonies "according (as our thirty-fourth Article expresses it) to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word." He did not require that every ceremony should be able to plead a positive command in the Bible, nor that it should prove itself modelled after the original practice. Had he done this, it is manifest that he must have objected to the ceremonies in the celebration of the Passover; for they could not plead a divine institution, and were rather at variance than in accordance with what had been at first appointed or observed. But we may justly conclude that our Lord proceeded on what (were it not for modern cavils) we might call a self-evident principle, that rites and ceremonies are not in themselves any part of the public worship of God; they are nothing but circumstances and customs to be observed in the conducting that worship, and may therefore be enacted and altered as shall seem best to the church. Had the innovations of the Jews interfered, in any measure, with the character of the Passover as a religious ordinance, had they at all opposed its commemorative office, or militated against it as a sacrifice and a sacrament, we cannot doubt that Christ would have entered his protest, that he would never have given the sanction of his example to what would have been a corruption of the worship of God. This, however, is more than can justly be affirmed of any mere rite or ceremony; for rites or ceremonies, so long as they are not against Scripture, must be regarded as indifferent things, neither good in themselves nor bad; and if they are indifferent, they may be omitted, or introduced, or changed, without at all affecting the act of divine worship, and merely in conformity, according to diversity of circumstances, with the rule of the Apostle,

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

Perhaps the Jews, in changing the posture in which the Passover was to be eaten, went as near to an interference with the ordinance itself as any mere rite or ceremony could go; for it might have been urged that a different, if not an untrue, character was given to the ordinance, the aspect of composedness and rest having been made to take the place of that of haste and agitation. But you are to remember that the circumstances of the Israelites were really changed; the Passover, as to be commemorated in after times, found them in a very altered position from what they had occupied when the Passover was originally instituted; and the new rites, which they introduced, did but correspond to this new position; they interfered neither with the slaying nor with the eating of the lamb; they were only so far different from the old as to indicate what was matter of fact in regard of the Jews, that, as their fathers eat the Passover in a night of disaster and death, themselves were allowed, through the mercy of God, to eat of it in security and gladness. And it can hardly fail to strike you, that, in such an alteration, when distinctly sanctioned by the practice of our Lord, we have a precedent for changes which the church may have introduced into the ceremonials of religion. Take, for example, a case which bears close resemblance to that just considered. When the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was originally instituted, the Apostles sat or reclined in the receiving it; whereas it is now the appointment of the church that we should kneel to receive it. There has been, that is, much of the same departure from the first practice as in the instance of the Passover. And if by the act of kneeling we offered any adoration to the bread and the wine, as though we supposed them substantially changed into Christ's body and blood, it is evident that the alteration in the ceremony would be an infringement of the Sacrament itself, and that no church would have right to substitute the kneeling for the sitting. But the kneeling at the Communion, as we expressly taught by the church, is meant only "for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all

worthy receivers;" and the alteration may therefore be said to be just such as was made by the Jews in respect of the Passover—an alteration corresponding to altered circumstances; when the Lord's Supper was instituted, Christ had not died, and the benefits of his death, as conveyed through the Sacrament, were but partially, if at all, understood; but now that Christ hath died, and the Spirit been given to explain and apply his finished work, we know that the Lord's Supper is the great instituted means for the communication to our souls of the results of his sacrifice; and surely, if a reclining posture became those who had yet to learn what the Sacrament would do for them, a kneeling may be more appropriate, when the office of that holy mystery has been more unfolded.

But without insisting further on particular instances, which would only unduly detain us from other and more interesting truths, we venture to take our Lord's conduct, in regard of the ceremonies at the Passover, as establishing the authority of the church to ordain and alter ceremonies and rites, and as strongly condemning those who would make mere ceremonies and rites the excuses for disunion and schism. Our Lord conformed to customs and alterations, for which it would have been impossible to produce divine warrant, and against which it would not have been difficult to advance some specious objections. And we argue, therefore, that the church is not obliged to find chapter and verse for every ceremony which she is pleased to enjoin, as though she had no power of settling points of discipline or order, except so far as she can justify the settlement by an appeal to inspired authority. We argue further, from the instance before us, that the church having appointed what she judges most for the general good, individuals have no right to separate and oppose, because they do not find the appointment precisely congenial with their feelings or circumstances. Look at Christ and his Apostles—they were about to be parted; Christ was just entering upon scenes immeasurably more tremendous than had ever been passed through by any of our race; the Apostles were full of apprehensions and grief, for their Lord had announced his departure, and the an-

nouncement had distracted their minds. What an unseasonable moment for singing joyous hymns! How natural to have said, "This part of the appointed service is not suited to us now; and, forasmuch as it certainly is not of divine institution, we may surely dispense with it, when our hearts are so heavy and sad." But no! it was the ordinance of the church: the church had full authority to appoint such an ordinance; and Christ and his Apostles would give their testimony to the duty of conformity to all lawful ordinances, whether in unison or not with individual feelings. And on this account, as we may venture to believe—or, if not for this purpose, assuredly with this result—though they were stricken in spirit, disquieted, yea, sorely distressed, they would not depart from the chamber till they had done all which was enjoined by the church, and thus shown that they acknowledged her authority: it was not until "they had sung an hymn," that "they went out into the Mount of Olives."

But now let us take another view of this fact. We have just considered the singing of an hymn as inappropriate to the circumstances of Christ and his Apostles; and no doubt there was an apparent unsuitableness which might have been pleaded by those who sought an excuse for disobedience to ecclesiastical rule. Solomon has said, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart." And thus the wise man may be considered as having delivered his testimony against the fitness of music and minstrelsy, when there is a weight at the heart, and the spirits are oppressed. But "a greater than Solomon is here;" and we may perhaps say that it was with the singing of an hymn that Christ prepared himself for his unknown agony. Setting aside all considerations drawn from the ordinances of the church, is it at all strange that our blessed Lord and his disciples should have sung joyous hymns at a moment so full of darkness and dread? For joyous hymns they were in which they joined: music has its melancholy strains as well as its gladdening—the dirge for the funeral as well as the song for the marriage or the banquet: and Christ and his Apostles might have thrown the sadness of their spirits into

the slow, measured cadences of some solemn lament. But, as we have just said, they were joyous hymns in which they joined. Look at the Jewish Hallel, and you find it abounding in expressions of confidence and praise: "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

And was it, think you, a strange preparation for the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane, thus to commemorate the mercies, and chant the praises of the Most High God? Nay, it is recorded of Luther that, on receiving any discouraging news, he was wont to say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm,"—that Psalm which commences with the words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." And it were well for us, my brethren, if in seasons of trouble we betook ourselves to praise, and not only to prayer. If we find ourselves in circumstances of difficulty, if dangers surround us, and duties seem too great for our strength, we almost naturally cry unto God, and entreat of him assistance and guardianship. And indeed we do right: God has made our receiving conditional on our asking; and we can never be too diligent in supplicating at his hands the supply of our many necessities. But ought we to confine ourselves to prayer, as though praise were out of place when mercies are needed, and only became us when they have just been received? Not so; praise is the best auxiliary to prayer; and he who most bears in mind what has been done for him by God, will be most emboldened to supplicate fresh gifts from above. We should recount God's mercies, we should call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to laud and magnify his name when summoned to face new trials, and encounter fresh dangers. Would it sound to you strange, if on approaching the chamber where, as you knew, the father of a family had just breathed his

last, you heard voices mingling, not in a melancholy chant, but rather in one of lofty commemoration, such as might be taken from the Jewish Hallel, "The Lord hath been mindful of us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron? The Lord is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Would you be disposed to say that the widow and the orphans, whose voices you recognized in the thankful anthem, were strangely employed? and that the utterances over the dead would have more fittingly been those of earnest petition unto God, of deep-drawn entreaty for the light of his countenance and the strength of his Spirit? Nay, the widow and her orphans, if not actually praying the most effectual of prayers, would be thereby most effectually preparing themselves for praying unto God: if, now that their chief earthly stay is removed, they have to enter on a dark and dangerous path, they cannot do better than thus call to mind what the Almighty has proved himself to others and themselves; the anthem is the best prelude to the supplication; and their first step toward the Mount of Olives will be all the firmer, if, before they cry, "Hold thou up our goings in thy paths," they join in the song, "His merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever; praise ye the Lord."

We wish you to draw this lesson from the last action of Christ and his Apostles, before they went forth to extraordinary trial. We wish you to observe, and understand, that so far from being unsuited to circumstances of perplexity and danger, the song of praise should at least mingle with the cry of prayer, and that, if you would arm yourselves for trouble and for duty, you should recount the marvellous acts of the Lord, as well as supplicate the communications of his grace. This is too much overlooked and neglected by christians. They are more familiar with the earnest petition than with the grateful anthem. Like the captives in Babylon, they hang their harps upon the willows, when they find themselves in a strange land; whereas, if they would sing "one the songs of Zion," it would not only remind them of home, but encourage them to ask assistance and expect deliverance. Make trial of this method, ye who have a dark

path before you, and who shrink from entering into the cloud. You have offered prayer—have you also offered praise? you have commended yourselves to God for the future—have you also commemorated his care of you through the past? Say not, “How can I sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” With this burden upon me, and this prospect before me, it is too much to expect me to do more than pray: who can sing songs with a heavy heart?” This is the very feeling against which we would warn you. There is no Christian with so great cause of sorrow, as to be without a greater of thankfulness. And the chords of the soul will never give forth so fervent a prayer, as when the Christian has been endeavoring to string them to the chorus of praise. Look at Christ and his Apostles. You will not say that your circumstances can be more distressing than theirs; that there is more in the peculiarities of the trial, to excuse you from singing “the Lord’s song.” Yet before they departed—the Redeemer to his terrible agony, the disciples to the dreaded separation—the last thing which they did was to join in the chanting of thankful psalms: it was not until “they had sung an hymn,” but then it was, that “they went out into the Mount of Olives.”

But we have yet to observe, that so far as praise is a great auxiliary to prayer, and therefore well adapted to circumstances of perplexity and danger, the repetition of thankful psalms might seem sufficient; whereas, with Christ and his Apostles, there was the singing of such psalms. We think that this fact ought not to be let pass without a more special comment.

We are too apt to regard music as a human art, or invention, just because men make certain musical instruments, and compose certain musical pieces. And hence there are christians who would banish music from the public worship of God, as though unsuited to, or unworthy of, so high and illustrious an employment. But it is forgotten, as has been observed by a well-known writer,* that the principles of harmony are in the elements of nature, that, “the element of air was as certainly ordained

to give us harmonious sounds in due measure, as to give respiration to the lungs.” God has given us “music in the air, as he hath given us wine in the grape;” leaving it to man to draw forth the rich melody, as well as to extract the inspiring juice, but designing that both should be employed to his glory, and used in his service. Wine was eminently consecrated for religion, when chosen as the sacramental representation of the precious blood of the Redeemer; and a holy distinction ought never to be denied to music, whilst the Psalmist, speaking undoubtedly by the Spirit of God, exclaims, “Praise him with stringed instruments and organs; praise him upon loud cymbals; praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals.”

It is not, however, instrumental music which is mentioned in the text. “They sang an hymn.” There is another remarkable instance recorded in the New Testament of God’s praises having been sung at a strange time, and in a strange place. Paul and Silas, thrust into the inner prison at Philippi and with their feet made fast in the stocks, had recourse to singing, as though their condition had been prosperous, and their spirits elated. “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them.” They were not content with reminding each the other of the goodness of God, with speaking of his greatness and loving-kindness: “they sang praises unto God;” and that, too, with so loud a voice, that the other prisoners heard them, though confined in the remotest parts of the dungeon. In like manner, Christ and his Apostles “sang an hymn:” they were not satisfied with repeating an hymn; and we may certainly gather from this, that God’s praises ought to be sung rather than spoken, that singing is the more appropriate vehicle, even when circumstances may be such as to make music seem almost out of place.

It may, we think, fairly be said that the power of singing has not been sufficiently considered as one of the Creator’s gifts to his creatures, and, therefore, intended to be used to his glory. We recognize this fact in regard of the power of speech: we acknowledge that God must have endowed man with the faculty of uttering articulate sounds, and have clothed his tongue with language; and

* Jones, of Nayland.

we confess that this very fact renders us responsible, in a high sense, for our words, and destroys all surprise that words are to be made a criterion at the last. A noble gift is abused, whensoever an idle word is spoken: why then should we marvel at the assertion of our Lord, "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment!" "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

But, to quote again from the writer already referred to,* "the faculty, by which the voice forms musical sounds, is as wonderful as the flexure of the organs of speech in the articulation of words." Considered as the result of certain mechanical arrangements, singing is perhaps even more marvellous than speaking, or gives a stronger witness to the skill and the power of the Creator. This is not the place for bringing proof of such assertion; but they who have considered the human throat as a musical instrument, and have examined, on this supposition, its structure and capacity, declare that it presents "such a refinement on mechanism as exceeds all description." And we are not to doubt that God gave this faculty to man, that he might employ it on his praises. The Psalmist having said, "Awake, psaltery and harp," exclaims, "I myself will awake early:" it did not content him, that instruments of music should start from their silence, and give forth the slumbering harmony; he regarded himself as an instrument more curious, and more costly, than any framed by a human artificer; and, therefore, would he too awake and swell with his voice the tide of melody.

But singing, like music in general, has been too much given up by the church to the world; it has not been sufficiently considered, and cultivated, as designed for religious ends, and helpful to religious feelings. And hence, for the most part, our psalmody is discreditable to our congregations; it is either given over to a few hired singers, as though we were to praise God by deputy; or is left with the children of the national schools, as though, in growing older, we had less cause for thankfulness. Let me say

that the efforts which are now being systematically made throughout the country to teach our population to sing, should be regarded with great interest and pleasure by the christian. Such efforts have a more immediate bearing than is, perhaps, commonly thought, on the national piety. I do not merely mean that there is a humanizing power in music, and that the poor, taught to sing, are likely to be less wild, and less prone to disorder, and therefore more accessible to the ministrations of religion. Not, indeed, that I would make no account of this, for I thoroughly believe that, in improving the tastes of a people, you are doing much for their moral advancement. I like to see our cottagers encouraged to train the rose and the honeysuckle round their doors, and our weavers, as is often the fact, dividing their attention between their looms and their carnations; for the man who can take care of a flower, and who is all alive to its beauty, is far less likely than another, who has no delight in such recreations, to give himself up to gross lusts and habits. But, independently on this, if singing were generally taught, the psalmody in our churches could not fail to be generally improved. And I am quite sure that this could not take place without, by the blessing of God, a great spiritual benefit. When many voices join heartily in prayer, it is hardly possible to remain undevout; when many voices join heartily in praise, it is hardly possible to remain indifferent. Every one feels this. In a congregation, where the responses are generally left to the clerk and the children, how difficult is it to pray! whereas, if the majority join, one is drawn in almost unconsciously, and cannot keep back his cordial amen. Thus, also, in a congregation where few attempt to sing, how difficult it is to magnify the Lord! but who can resist the rush of many voices! whose bosom does not swell, as old and young, rich and poor, mingle their notes of adoration and thankfulness?

You may tell me that there is not necessarily any religion in all this emotion. I know that; and I would not have you mistake emotion for religion. But we are creatures so constituted as to be acted on through our senses and feelings; and whilst emotion is not religion, it will often be a great step towards

* Jones.

it. The man who has imbibed, so to speak, the spirit of prayer and of praise from the surrounding assembly, is far more likely to give an attentive ear to the preached word, and to receive from it a lasting impression, than another whose natural coldness has been increased by that of the mass in which he found himself placed. In teaching, therefore, a people to sing with the voice "the songs of Zion," we cannot but believe that, God helping, much is done towards teaching them to sing with the understanding and the heart. A faculty is developed, which God designed for his glory, but which has, comparatively, been allowed to remain almost useless. Yes, a faculty which God designed for his glory; and, if so designed, it cannot lie idle without injury, nor be rightly exercised without advantage. And I seem to learn, from our text, that it is not enough that we praise God with speech. Christ and his Apostles "sang an hymn," ere "they went out into the Mount of Olives." What had music, cheerful and animated music, to do with so sad and solemn an occasion? Nay, there is music in heaven: they who stand on the "sea of glass mingled with fire,"

have "the harps of God" in their hands: "they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:" why then should music ever be out of place with those whose affections are above?

It would not be out of place in the chamber of the dying believer. He has just received, through the holy mystery of the eucharist, the body and the blood of his blessed Redeemer. And now his own failing voice, and the voices of relatives and friends, join in chanting words which the church directs to be either said or sung, as the conclusion of the sacramental service: "Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good-will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty." Wonder ye, that, when there was the option either to say or to sing, they chose the singing at such a moment? Nay, they all felt that they had a rough hill to climb; and they remembered, that, when Christ and his Apostles had finished their last supper, "they sang an hymn," and then "went out into the Mount of Olives."

S E R M O N V.

CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD.

"All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household."—PHILIPPIANS IV. 22.

The earlier ages of the church seem to have been distinguished by a love which made all christians regard themselves as members of one family. The saying of our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," appears to have been successfully taken as fur-

nishing their rule of conduct; for "See how these christians love one another," was the common remark of enemies and persecutors.

And the observable thing is, that the love of which we speak was actually the love of christians as christians, irrespective altogether of other claims upon af-

fection. The moment a man embraced christianity, he was regarded as a brother, and felt to be a brother, by the whole christian body: a thousand hearts at once beat kindly towards him; and multitudes, who were never likely to see him in the flesh, were instantly one with him in spirit. It may admit of great doubt whether there be much, in our own day, of that which thus distinguished the beginning of christianity. The love of christians because they are christians, no regard being had to country or condition—is this still a strongly marked characteristic of those who profess themselves the disciples of the Redeemer? There was something very touching and beautiful in Christ's promise to such as should forsake all for his sake: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands." How was such a promise fulfilled, except that they, who had been cast out for their religion from their own families and possessions, found themselves admitted at once into a new household, and endowed with new property, even the household and the property of the whole christian community? For every natural relation whom they had lost, they obtained instantly a hundred spiritual; and the goods of which they had been spoiled, returned to them, a thousand-fold multiplied, in the possessions of those who received them as children and brethren. Thus was strikingly verified a description long before given of God by the Psalmist: "He setteth the solitary in families"—for they who were to all appearance abandoned, left orphaned and alone in the world, found themselves surrounded by kinsmen.

But it is only, we fear, in a very limited sense, that the like can be affirmed of the christians of our own day. Yet the criterion of genuine christianity remains just what it was: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." In our own time the ends of the earth are being wondrously brought together: there is an ever-growing facility of communication between country and country; and this must rapidly break down many barriers,

and bring far-scattered tribes into familiar intercourse. In earlier times, nation was widely divided from nation: the inhabitants of different lands were necessarily almost strangers to each other; and you could not have expected an approximation to universal brotherhood. But then it was, in the face of all obstacles to personal communion, that the spirit of christianity showed its comprehensive and amalgamating energies: the name of Christ was as a spell to annihilate distance; to plant the cross in a land, sufficed to make that land one with districts removed from it by the diameter of the globe. Alas for the colder temper of modern times! We have made paths across the waters, we have exalted the valleys, we have brought low the hills, so that we can visit every region, and scarce seem to leave our home; but where is that glowing and ample charity, which would throb towards christians whom we have never seen, and make us feel that our own household includes the far off and the near, all who worship the same God, and trust in the same Mediator?

We have been led into these remarks, from observing, in the apostolical writings, the affectionate greetings which the members of one church send to those of another. For the most part, these churches had no intercourse the one with the other; they were widely separated by situation; and, had it not been for the bond of a common faith, their members would have been as much strangers as though they had belonged to different orders of being. And yet you would judge, from the warm remembrances, the kindly messages, which pass between them, that they were associated by most intimate relationship, that they were friends who had spent years together, or kinsmen who had been brought up beneath the same roof. When St. Paul wrote thus to the Colossians, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh," you would have thought, from the energy of his expressions, that it must have been for some dear and long-tried acquaintance that he was thus deeply interested, had he not immediately described the objects of his solicitude, as those who had not seen his face in the flesh. And, in like manner, when you read the

salutations sent by one church to another, the warm and cordial greetings, you would conclude that these churches had held familiar intercourse, that their members had conversed much together, and mingled in the intimacies of life, if you did not know, from other sources of information, that they were strangers to each other, except as all belonging to Christ's mystical body. So strong a link of association was christianity then felt to be! Christians knew that there were christians in distant lands, whom they were never likely to visit, and who were never likely to visit them—but what mattered it, that they were not to see one another in the flesh? They were grafted into the same vine, they were washed in the same blood, they were quickened by the same Spirit; and feeling, therefore, as though one mother had born them, and one home sheltered them, they poured forth hearty salutations, and multiplied expressions of the very tenderest affection.

It was thus with the Romans and the Philippians. They were widely removed the one from the other; and probably there had been little or no personal intercourse between the members of the churches. Yet you find, from our text, that the christians at Rome felt kindly towards the christians at Philippi, and charged St. Paul with their sentiments of esteem and good-will. "All the saints salute you"—not, you observe, a few of the most distinguished, of those who had advanced farthest in the charity enjoined by the Gospel—but "all the saints salute you." O blessed estate of a Christian Church, when every member had a cordial greeting to send to persons whom he had never beheld, but whom he loved, as loving the Savior with himself.

You will, however, naturally suppose that we selected our present text not so much as containing the general salutation of one church by another, as on account of its marking out certain individuals as specially earnest in their greetings. "All the saints salute you; chiefly, they that are of Cæsar's household." There was a friendly salutation from all the members of the Roman Church; but the most friendly issued from those who appertained to the household of Cæsar. And we consider this as an intimation which ought not to be cursorily passed

over. We think that truths and lessons of no common interest may be drawn from this brief reference to the christians who were to be found in the imperial circle. We design, therefore, to confine ourselves to the examining this reference, to the endeavoring to discover what it may imply, and what it may enjoin. We are aware, that, at first, it will probably appear to you a barren statement, the announcement of a simple fact, on which little, if any, instruction can be drawn. But if you would read the Bible with this rule in mind, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," you would find that nothing is stated which could be omitted without loss; and that often, where there is least to strike the superficial reader, there is most to repay the diligent student. Without then further preface, and without proposing any plan of discourse, which might perhaps only impede our inquiries, we ask your attention, whilst endeavoring to show what truths and lessons are furnished by the information that there were saints in the household of Cæsar, and that these were foremost in greeting the saints at Philippi.

Now you are to observe that the throne of the Cæsars was at this time occupied by Nero, a monster rather than a man, whose vices and cruelties will make his name infamous to the very end of the world. Certainly, if ever there was an atmosphere uncongenial to christianity, it may be supposed to have been that of the court and palace of this bloody debauchee. It ordinarily happens that the character of the prince gives the tone to that of his courtiers and attendants; and it would therefore be hardly imaginable that the household of a Nero was not composed in the main of the fierce and the dissolute. And it should further be observed, that there was a direct hostility to christianity on the part of the emperor; he became eventually a most bitter persecutor of the christians, and St. Paul himself perished by his sword. Where, then, on all human calculation, was there less likelihood of the Gospel gaining footing than in the court and household of Nero? Yet so true was St. Paul's assertion, that the weapons of his warfare were "mighty through God to the casting down of strong-holds," that there were

men of Cæsar's household worthy the high title of saints; men not secretly, but openly, christians; not ashamed of their professions, but willing to give it all publicity by sending greetings to christians in other cities of the earth. And our first inquiry will naturally be, as to the agency which brought round so unlikely a result; how it came to pass, that an entrance was achieved, and a firm footing gained for christianity, where there might have seemed a moral impossibility against its admission, or, at all events, its settlement? Your minds will naturally turn, in answer to this inquiry, to the miraculous gifts with which St. Paul was endowed, to the credentials which he was enabled to furnish of the divine origin of christianity, and to the power and persuasiveness with which he set forth its doctrines. You will remember with what noble intrepidity he rose up before the sages of Greece, and won over even proud philosophy by his reasoning and eloquence; and you will further call to mind, how, when he spake unflinchingly to Felix, the slave of base lusts, the haughty Roman trembled, as though the judgment had already been upon him with its terrors. And whilst there are these registered achievements of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, you think it quite intelligible that he should have made proselytes even from the household of Nero: you perhaps imagine him working some great miracle, in order to compel the attention of the emperor and his court, and then preaching, with a more than human oratory, the Gospel of Christ, till slumbering consciences were startled, and bold vices abashed.

Indeed you do right in thus ascribing extraordinary power to the miracles and sermons of St. Paul: we could have felt no surprise, supposing this Apostle to have had opportunities of audience, had even Nero trembled like Felix, and had converts been won from the courtiers of Rome, as well as from the philosophers of Athens. But, nevertheless, in this instance the explanation utterly fails: St. Paul was now a prisoner, kept in close confinement; and, though allowed to receive those who came unto him, was not at liberty, as at other times, to labor openly and vigorously at propagating the Gospel. He could not go, as you have supposed him, like Moses and Aaron, with the rod in his hand, and

compel by his miracles the attention of a profligate king, and then deliver, in the name of the living God, the message of rebuke and the prophecy of vengeance. And yet it was at this very time, when the chief instrument in the diffusion of christianity seemed comparatively disabled, that the great triumph was won, and the imperial household gave members to the church. Nay, and more than this, it appears to have been actually in consequence of his being a prisoner for the faith, rather than a preacher of the faith, that St. Paul was instrumental to the obtaining this victory. If you refer to the commencement of this Epistle to the Philippians, you will find the Apostle ascribing to his imprisonment the very result of which we are now seeking the cause. He expresses himself fearful lest the Philippians should have thought that the afflictions with which he had been visited, had impeded the progress of the Gospel. He assures them that quite the contrary effect had been produced: "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which have happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." Thus, you see, it was not by his sermons, it was literally by his bonds, that the attention of the court had been attracted to christianity: it was as a captive that he had mastered rulers, and with his chain that he had struck off their fetters. In the following verse he adds another statement as to the efficaciousness of his bonds: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Hence there were two ways, as it would appear, in which his bonds gave enlargement to christianity. The patience and meekness with which he submitted to long and unjust confinement, drew public attention, and compelled men to feel that, where there was such willingness to suffer, there must be the consciousness of advocating truth. And then the supports and consolations which were ministered to him by God, taught other christians that they could not be losers through intrepidity in preaching the Gospel, and therefore nerved them to greater energy in the work from which Paul himself was temporarily withdrawn.

In these ways were the Apostle's bonds influential; so that when, to all appearance, he was able to do least, when his power of usefulness seemed the most limited, then was it that he won admission for christianity into the circle from which you would have thought it most surely excluded.

We cannot but think that a great lesson was thus given, as to God's power of overruling evil for good, of producing the most signal results when the employed instrumentality appears the least adequate. How apt are we to imagine, when a man is overtaken by sickness, or withdrawn, through one cause or another, from more active duty, that his period of usefulness has closed! How ready are we to lament over what we call a mysterious dispensation, as the Roman christians may have done over the imprisonment of St. Paul! But who shall say that it does not often come to pass, that the minister preaches far more effectually from his sick-bed, than ever he did from his pulpit! The report, which goes forth amongst his people, of the patience with which he bore pain, and the calmness with which he met death, will perhaps do more towards overcoming their resistance to the Gospel, than all his energy effected, whilst he gave himself night and day to the bringing them to repentance. Or again, was it whilst they were free to move through a land, and to wrestle boldly with prevailing errors and superstitions, that martyrs and confessors did most for the cause of God and of truth? Was it not rather when they were actually in the clutches of the persecutor, pining in dungeons, or dragged to the scaffold? The flame which consumed them, prevailed most to the scattering the spiritual darkness; and their dust was as seed whence moral virtue sprang. Oh, let no one ever think, that, because unable to exert himself openly and actively, as he once did, for God, he has no duties to perform, no services to render, no rewards to secure. A true christian is never, if we may use a common expression, laid by: God makes use of him in sickness and in health, in life and in death. And the influence which proceeds from him, when languishing on his couch, reduced to poverty, or overwhelmed with affliction, is often incomparably greater than when, in the fulness of his strength, with

every engine at his disposal, he moved amongst his fellow-men, and took the lead in each benevolent enterprise. It is on sick-beds that the sustaining power of christianity is most displayed: it is amid multiplied troubles that its professed comforts are put to the proof: it is by dying men that its best promises are shown to have been indeed made by God. And even when the grave has closed upon a righteous man, is it not often true that "he, being dead, yet speaketh?" His memory admonishes and encourages, and that, too, more powerfully than even his living example.

Let no one, then, conclude himself disabled from doing God service, because he can no longer perform active duties, nor take visible part in advancing Christ's kingdom upon earth. Resignation has its victories as well as intrepidity: converts may be made through meekness in trial, as well as through boldness in enterprise. And if we would reconcile ourselves to the apparent suspension of our usefulness; if we would learn that God may be employing us most, when he seems to have most withdrawn us from employment; let us ponder the fact brought before us by our text. I think upon Rome, the metropolis of the world, upon the haughty Cæsars, giving laws to well nigh all the nations of the earth. O that christianity might make way into the imperial halls! I should feel as though it were about to triumph over heathenism, were it to penetrate the palace of Nero. And then I hear that St. Paul is approaching towards Rome—St. Paul, who has carried the Gospel to the east and west, the north and south, and every where made falsehood quail before truth. My expectations are raised. This great champion of christianity may succeed where there is most to discourage, and gain over Nero's courtiers, if not Nero himself. But then I hear that St. Paul comes as a prisoner: I see him used as a criminal, and debarred from all opportunity of publishing the Gospel to the illustrious and powerful. My hopes are destroyed. The great Apostle seems to me completely disarmed; and the picture which I had fondly drawn of christianity growing dominant through God's blessing on his labors, disappears when I behold him detained in captivity. Alas for human short-sightedness and miscalculation!

Never again let me dare reckon God's servants least powerfully, when least visibly instrumental in promoting his cause. St. Paul is a prisoner; St. Paul cannot go boldly to the court, and preach to the mighty; but, in less than two years, he is able to declare, "My bonds are manifest in all the palace," and to enumerate amongst the saints, who send greetings to the Philippians, "chiefly them that are of Cæsar's household."

We go on to observe to you—and the observation is of prime importance—that a man cannot be placed in circumstances so disadvantageous to piety as to put it out of his power to give heed to the duties of religion. We have already spoken to you of the character of Nero, and of the profligacy which must have deformed his household and court. We have admitted that, if ever there were an atmosphere un congenial to christianity, it must have been that of the Roman court, with such an emperor at its head. We could not have been surprised, had the religion of Jesus striven in vain for admission; and it was the little apparent likelihood of there being saints in the household of Cæsar, which suggested the foregoing inquiry as to the instrumentality through which the Gospel succeeded in making these converts. But, nevertheless, the converts were made, and that too, you are carefully to remember, not through any extraordinary agency, seeing that the employed preaching was not that of St. Paul, but only of subordinate ministers. Certainly such an instance as this should show the worthlessness of an excuse with which men would sometimes palliate their neglect of religion—that they are exposed to such temptations, surrounded by such hinderances, or liable to such opposition, that it is vain for them to attempt the great duties of repentance and faith. We challenge any man to show that he is more unfavorably circumstanced than the members of Nero's household must have been. We challenge him to show any likelihood that the profession of religion would expose him to greater dangers, bring on him more obloquy, or cause severer loss, than might have been expected to follow the exchange of heathenism for christianity, by those who bore office in the Roman emperor's court. And whilst we have before

us full evidence, that even the servants of Nero could overcome every disadvantage, and "shine as lights" in the church of the Redeemer, we can never admit that the temporal circumstances of any man disqualify him for the being a true christian, or put such obstacles in his way as excuse his not advancing to eminence as a believer.

We readily acknowledge that more appears done for one man than for another; that some circumstances may be said to conduce to the making men pious, whilst others increase the difficulty of separation from the world, and consecration to God. But we can be certain, from the known strength of divine grace, and its sufficiency to all the ends of the renewal and perfecting of our nature, that, under every possible disadvantage, there may be a striving with evil, and a following after good, in obedience to the precepts, and in hope of the recompenses, of the Gospel. We will not, at present, discuss whether it be a man's duty, when he feels his circumstances unfavorable to personal religion, to labor to escape from those circumstances; whether the courtier should flee the court where there are incitements to evil, the merchant the traffic which burdens him with cares, or the servant the household where godliness is held in contempt. We may find opportunity hereafter of treating this point; we now only say, that the case may often be one in which there is no escape from the circumstances which make piety difficult, and in which the duty of remaining in the disadvantageous position may be as clear as that of struggling against its disadvantages. But we contend that, whensoever such is the case, it is no apology for an individual's continuing void of personal religion, that he would have great difficulties to wrestle with in becoming religious. The individual may fasten on these difficulties, and urge them in excuse, when conscience admonishes him as to the great duties of godliness. But the excuse will not bear investigation; forasmuch as it assumes that God has put it out of the man's power to provide for his soul's safety in eternity; and to assume this is to contradict the Divine word, and throw scorn on the Divine attributes.

We take, for example, the instance most naturally suggested by our text,

that of a servant in an irreligious family. We have great sympathy with persons so circumstanced: we count their situation one of no common difficulty. Their superiors set them a bad example, an example of sabbath-breaking, of neglect of all religion, and, perhaps, even of undisguised vice. Few opportunities are afforded them of attending public worship; and they have but little time for private devotion. If inclined to give heed to religion, they cannot but perceive that any indication of piety would perhaps lose them the favor of their master, and bring upon them the ridicule of their associates. We say again that we have great sympathy with an individual thus situated; we feel that he has more than a common battle to fight, if he stand forth as a candidate for immortality. But there is nothing in his position to make it impracticable that he become truly religious, nor excusable that he defer the season of providing for the soul. Be his difficulties what they may, we can be confident that they would rapidly disappear before the earnest resolve of seeking "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." He has but to begin, and presently would he find that obstacles, which appeared insurmountable, are gradually lowered, and that, if he have to encounter all which he dreaded, it is in a strength which grows with the exigence. What we fear for this man, when we know him plied with the remonstrances of conscience, it is not that, if he set himself fearlessly to regulate his conduct by the revealed will of God, he may find that he has not time enough for religion, or that the trials of his station are too great to be surmounted; it is only that he may shield himself behind his confessed disadvantages, and hold himself blameless in not making an attempt, where the likelihood of success seems so slight. We would come down upon him, in his moment of indecision, when conscience is rebuking his neglect of the one thing needful, and when he strives to parry the rebuke, by asking how he can attend to religion whilst the very air which he breathes seems impregnated with wickedness? We will hear nothing of an impossibility. Time may be made, prayer may be offered, the Bible may be read, vice may be forsaken, contempt may be braved, and the Spirit of the living God fails no man who is not false to

himself. And if he plead the ungodliness of the family in which he is placed, and maintain it not to be expected that righteousness should be acquired, where there is every thing to fasten down a man to evil, we require of him to go with us in thought to the household of Nero. We tell him of the depravity of that scourge and disgrace of human-kind, we describe to him the fierce profligacy which pervaded his court: we show him how it was like rushing into the flames, then and there to embrace christianity: and we leave him to think, if he dare, that any scene, or association, can excuse the neglect of religion, when St. Paul could single out, from the whole mass of Roman christians, "chiefly them that were of Cæsar's household."

We proceed to what we reckon the most important of the remarks which we have to offer on the passage which forms our subject of discourse. You will observe that the saints, of whom St. Paul speaks in the text, not only belonged to Cæsar's household at the time of their conversion to christianity, but remained in that household after their conversion. It is evident that they did not feel it their duty to abandon the stations in which Providence had placed them, and seek others apparently more favorable to the growth of religion. And we may conclude that their decision was right, for, having direct intercourse with St. Paul, who could furnish them with rules of conduct derived immediately from God, we cannot doubt that they did what ought to have been done. So that it does not at all follow that a man is to withdraw himself from circumstances of danger and difficulty, and strive to place himself in a condition where there shall be less temptation or opposition. We cannot, indeed, think that a converted man would be justified in seeking employment where he knew that it would be specially difficult to cultivate religion: but we can believe that he might be justified in retaining his employment, supposing him thus placed at time of conversion. To desert his employment, because it made religion difficult, would be to declare that the grace, which had converted him, in spite of disadvantages, would not suffice to the establishing and perfecting him; and thus would his first step mark a distrust of God's Spirit, which would augur but ill for his after progress. If an employment

were in itself sinful, if it actually could not be carried on without sin, there would be no room for debate; it must be abandoned at once, though utter destitution might seem the inevitable consequence. But if the employment be only dangerous, if it only require a greater measure of circumspection, vigilance, and boldness, the forsaking it may prove timidity rather than prudence; a disposition to evade, rather than to conquer.

We doubt, for example, whether a man, roused to the great work of the saving the soul, could lawfully seek to place himself in the midst of the temptations of a court, and surround himself with those hinderances to spiritual religion which too often abound in the palaces of princes. But it would make all the difference if he were a courtier at the time of his being first made to feel that he had a soul; a court is a lawful, though a dangerous, residence; and it may not only be allowable, it may even be required that he should continue where he is, and take advantage of his position to adorn and diffuse christianity. It might not look like a saint to seek employment in the household of Cæsar; but it may be the very part of a saint not to withdraw from the household, and descend into humble life. A religious servant might not be justified in wilfully entering an irreligious family, where he knew that piety would be discountenanced in every possible way; but if he have become religious whilst serving in the irreligious family, it may be lawful for him to remain, nay, it may be unlawful for him to leave: it is lawful for him to remain, if he be not required to act against his conscience; it is unlawful for him to leave, if distinct opportunity be afforded him of doing honor to God, and promoting Christ's cause. And this latter supposition will probably hold good in the majority of cases. When one member of an irreligious household is converted, we regard him as the particle of leaven, placed by God in the midst of an unsound mass; and the circumstances must be very peculiar, which would seem to us to warrant the withdrawal of this particle, so that the mass should be again void of any righteous element.

We have great pleasure in contemplating the moral power with which God has invested the meanest of his people.

It is too common to judge power by station, and to compute the influence which a man may exert over others, by the temporal advantages which fall to his lot. But there is a power in religion, irrespective altogether of worldly station; a power which may indeed be used more extensively, if its possessor have command of other forces besides, but which may work the very finest results, supposing him to have nothing else to wield. We refer chiefly to the power of a consistent example; and we should confidently say to the religious servant in the irreligious family, that it is hardly possible to overrate the service which he, or she, may render to the cause of christianity. We are not supposing the servant to travel beyond the immediate duties of his station, for it is no recommendation of religion when persons put themselves forward, and assume offices to which they have never been called. We only suppose the servant to carry his christianity in all his occupations, and this will be sure to make him the most respectful, faithful, and diligent in the domestic establishment. He will be quickly distinguished from others by closer attention to his master's interests, by greater care of his master's property, by a stricter adherence to truth, and by a more obliging and submissive deportment. It is nothing to tell us that, often, where there is a religious profession, there are few or none of these characteristics; this is only telling us that hypocrisy is confined to no class of life, but may flourish equally in the kitchen and parlor. Let there be real religion, and whatever a man's station, it will show itself in the performance of the duties of that station. The rule admits no exceptions, for religion seats itself in the heart, and thence influences all the actions. Therefore, if there be one, in a mass of irreligious domestics, whom the Spirit of God has brought to repentance and faith, that one will rapidly distinguish himself from the rest by superior civility, diligence and honesty.

And it is just because true religion will thus necessarily display itself in the practice, that we ascribe to it a power, in every rank of life, of acting silently upon others, and assimilating them to itself. Let the irreligious master perceive that there is no one in his household so trust-

worthy as the professed disciple of Christ, no one on whose word he can place such dependence, no one who serves him with equal industry and alacrity; and it can hardly fail but that this master will gradually receive an impression favorable to religion, whatever may have been hitherto his opposition and prejudice. There is something mightily ennobling in this; for the meanest in a household, whose days are consumed in the lowest drudgeries of life, is thus represented as invested with a high power of winning triumphs for christianity, and turning many to righteousness. There may be families to which the preacher of the Gospel can gain no access; they will not come to listen to him on the Sabbath, and would scowl on him as an intruder in the week. And what instrumentality is there, through which to act on such families, barred up, as they are, against both the public and the private ministrations of the word? Nothing would be so hopeful as the instrumentality of pious domestics; and, therefore, God forbid that such domestics should hastily withdraw themselves from the households. We look to the pious servant to do what the minister of the Gospel has no opportunities of doing, to publish and recommend the doctrine of Christ, not by officious interference, and unbecoming reproof, and unasked-for advice; but by blamelessness of conduct, by devotedness to duty, by fidelity, by humility, by obligingness. We send that servant as our missionary into the very midst of the inaccessible family; not to deliver messages with his lip, but to deliver them through his life; and we can almost venture to predict, that if he do indeed, according to St. Paul's direction to servants, "adorn the doctrine of God the Savior in all things," it will gradually come to pass that religion conciliates some measure of respect, that those above him, and around him, inquire into his motives, and perhaps even seek for themselves what works so beautifully in another.

But if we may fairly contend that such an influence as this is wielded by a righteous domestic in an unrighteous family, we can feel no surprise, that, when God had won to himself servants from amongst the servants of Nero, he permitted, and perhaps even commanded, their remaining in the service of the pro-

fligate emperor. Who knows whether there may not, at first, have been a solitary convert, one who held but a mean place in the imperial household, and who may have desired to escape at once from a scene where there seemed to be so many by whom he might be injured, so few to whom he could do good? But he may have been admonished to remain; and by the mere force of a consistent deportment, he may have borne down much of the opposition to christianity, till at last, though he prevailed not to the bringing over the bloody emperor himself, he was surrounded by a goodly company of believers, and a church of the Redeemer rose in the very midst of the palace of the Cæsars. And whether or not it were thus, through the influence of a solitary convert, that the religion of Jesus established itself in the most unpromising scene, the great truth remains beyond controversy, that a post is not to be forsaken because it cannot be occupied without peril to personal piety. Let, therefore, any amongst yourselves, who may be disposed to abandon the station in which God has placed them, because of its dangers and trials, consider whether they may not have been thus circumstanced for the very purpose of being useful to others; and whether, then, it does not become them to persist in hope, rather than to desert it in fear. For very difficult would it be to show that any can have more cause to seek a change of service, than men converted from amongst the courtiers and domestics of Nero; and, nevertheless, these christians, with an apostle for their immediate instructor, adhered steadfastly to the employments in which conversion had found them; so that they were to be known by the striking description, "The saints that are of Cæsar's household."

But we have not yet exhausted the instructive truths which seem fairly deducible from the simple statement of our text. We felt, as we insisted on the last lesson—the lesson as to the duty of remaining in a perilous position—that some might feel as though we required them to injure themselves for the benefit of others; and when it is the soul which is at stake, there may be doubts whether a sacrifice such as this can be lawful. We maintained it to be right that Cæsar's house-

hold should not be deserted by the saints, because those saints, by remaining there, might be instrumental to the conversion of others to christianity. But, surely, it is a christian's first duty to give heed to his own growth in grace; how then can it be right that, with the vague hope of benefiting others, he should continue amongst hinderances to his own spiritual advancement?

Brethren, of this we may be certain, that, wheresoever God makes it a man's duty, there will he make it his interest to remain. If he employ one of his servants in turning others from sin, he will cause the employment to conduce to that servant's holiness. Is there no indication of this in the words of our text? We lay the emphasis now upon "chiefly," "chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household." Of all the Roman christians, the foremost in that love, which is the prime fruit of the Spirit, were those who were found amongst the courtiers and attendants of Nero, and who probably remained in his service for the express purpose of endeavoring to promote the cause of the Gospel. Then it is very evident that these christians sustained no personal injury, but rather outstripped, in all which should characterize believers, others who might have seemed more advantageously placed.

Neither do we feel any surprise at this: it is just the result for which we might have naturally looked. Is it the absence of temptation, is it the want of trial, which is most favorable to the growth of vital christianity? is it, when there is least to harass a christian, to put him on his guard, or keep him on the alert, that he is most likely to become spiritually great? If so, then men were right in former times, who fancied it most for the interest of the soul that they should absolutely seclude themselves from the world, and, withdrawing to some lonely hermitage, hold communion with no being but God. But this we believe to have been an error. The anchorite, who never mixed with his fellow-men, and who was never exposed to the temptations resulting from direct contact with the world, might easily persuade himself of his superior sanctity, and as easily deceive himself. He might suppose his evil passion subdued, his corrupt propensities eradicated, whereas, the real state of the case might be, that the evil passions were on-

ly quiet because not solicited, and that the propensities were not urged because there was nothing to excite them. Had he been brought away from his hermitage, and again exposed to temptation, it is far from improbable that he, who had won to himself a venerated name by his austerities, and who was presumed to have quite mastered the appetites and desires of an unruly nature, would have yielded to the solicitations with which he found himself beset, and given melancholy proof that the strength of his virtue lay in its not being tried. And, at all events, there is good ground for reckoning it an erroneous supposition, that piety must flourish best where least exposed to injury. The household of Cæsar may be a far better place for the growth of personal religion than the cell of a monk: in the one, the christian has his graces put continually to the proof, and this tends both to the discovering and the strengthening them; in the other, there is comparatively nothing to exercise virtue, and therefore may its very existence be only a delusion.

Why then is the courtier to think, that, by making it his duty to remain in the dangerous atmosphere of a court, we require him to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others? or the servant, that, by bidding him stay in the irreligious family, we doom him to the being hindered in the spiritual race? Far enough from this. Let the remaining be matter of conscience, and the advantageousness shall be matter of experience. "The God of all grace," who has promised that his people shall not be tempted above that they are able, will bestow assistance proportioned to the wants. The constant exposure to danger will induce constant watchfulness: multiplied difficulties will teach the need of frequent prayer: the beheld wickedness of others will keep alive an earnest desire, that the earth may be "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

And why, then, should not personal piety flourish? why should it be stunted? why, rather, should it not be more than commonly vigorous? Oh, let no man think that he cannot be expected to make great progress in religion, because he is obliged to be much in contact with wickedness, because his calling in life is one of great moral danger, keeping him associated with those who hate good, and

employed on what tends to increase worldly-mindedness? It will probably be from situations such as this, that God shall gather into the kingdom of heaven the most eminent of his servants. It may not be from cloistered solitudes, where piety had but little to contend with, that the distinguished ones shall advance when Christ distributes the prizes of eternity—it may rather be from the court, where worldliness reigned; from the exchange, where gold was the idol; and from the family, where godliness was held in derision. Not that there may not be exalted piety where there has not been extraordinary trial. But the extraordinary trial, met in God's strength, which is always sufficient, will be almost sure to issue in such prayerfulness, such faith, such vigilance, such devotedness, as can hardly be looked for where there is but little to rouse, to alarm, and to harass. Therefore, let those be of good cheer, who, if pious at all, must be pious in spite of a thousand hinderances and disadvantages. Let these hinderances and disadvantages only make

them earnest in prayer and diligent in labor, and they will prove their best helps in working out salvation. Witness the "chiefly" of our text. There were none in Rome, in whom the flame of christian love was so bright, as in those confined to the most polluted of atmospheres. God appointed them their station: they submitted in obedience to his will; and the result was, that the lamp, which you would have thought must have gone out in so pestilential an air, burnt stronger and clearer than in any other scene.

Look, then, upon your enemies as your auxiliaries, upon your dangers as your guardians, upon your difficulties as your helps. Christian men, and christian women, ye of whom God asks most in asking you to be his servants, for you he reserves most, if, indeed, ye be "faithful unto death." The "chiefly" of the text may be again heard; they who have been first in godliness shall be first in glory: and when Christ is saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," it may be with this addition, "chiefly they that were of Cæsar's household."

S E R M O N V I .

THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

* On that night could not the king sleep; and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king.—ESTHER VI. 1.

It will be necessary for us to enter somewhat minutely into the circumstances connected with what is here mentioned, that you may be prepared for the inferences which we design to draw from the passage. The Book of Esther is among the most interesting of the narratives contained in the Old Testament, furnishing proofs, as remarkable as numerous, of the ever-watchful

Providence of God. The king of the vast Persian Empire, of which Judea was at this time a province, had put from him his queen, in a moment of caprice and indignation, and advanced to her place a Jewess, named Esther, remarkable for her beauty, and as it afterwards appeared, for her piety and courage. This Esther, who had been left an orphan, had been brought up as

his daughter by her cousin Mordecai, who, having been "carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity" under Nebuchadnezzar, had obtained some appointment in the royal household at Shushan. The relationship, however, between the two was not generally known; and Mordecai instructed Esther not to avow herself a Jewess, lest the circumstance might operate to her disadvantage. This very concealment appears to have been ordered of God, and had much to do with subsequent events.

The king had a favorite, named Haman the Agagite, a man of boundless ambition and pride, who acquired complete ascendancy over the monarch. Honors and riches were heaped on this minion; it was even ordered, as it would seem, that he should receive the same reverential prostrations as were rendered to the king, and which appear to have gone beyond mere tokens of respect, and to have been actually of an idolatrous character. Mordecai, whose religion forbade his giving, in any measure, to man what appertained to God, refused to join the other servants of the king in thus honoring Haman, and drew remark upon himself by remaining standing whilst they fell to the ground. Mordecai had been unjustly treated; he had claim to some portion, at least, of the honors conferred upon Haman, though there is no reason to suppose that anger, or envy, had anything to do with his conduct towards the favorite. He had been unjustly treated—for he had discovered a conspiracy, on the part of two of the royal chamberlains to assassinate the king, and by apprising Esther of the bloody design, had prevented its execution. For this eminent service, however, he obtained no reward; his merit was overlooked, and he still sat in the gate of the king.

But it sorely displeased Haman that Mordecai refused him the appointed tokens of reverence. It was nothing to this haughty man that he had reached the highest point to which a subject could aspire, so long as he had to encounter a Jew who would not fall prostrate before him. He must have his revenge—but it shall be a large revenge; it were little to destroy Mordecai alone; the reasons which produced the refusal from the individual might operate equally on the thousands of his countrymen; Mordecai

then shall perish; but with him shall fall also the whole nation of the Jews.

It was a bold, as well as a bloody scheme, such as could not have been thought of except under an eastern despotism. Haman, however, knew that the lives of subjects were at the disposal of the king, so that if he could but possess himself of a royal edict against the Jews, he might compass his stern purpose, and exterminate the people. He sets, therefore, to work; but he will be religious in his wholesale massacre; he betakes himself to the casting of lots, that he may ascertain the day of the year most favorable to his project; and the lots—for "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord"—fixed him to a day eleven months distant, and by thus delaying his atrocious scheme, gave time for its defeat.

He had no difficulty in obtaining the iniquitous decree from the luxurious and indolent monarch: he simply told him that there was a strange people scattered about his empire, whom it would be well to destroy, and offered to pay a large sum into the royal treasury, to balance any loss which their destruction might occasion. The king, without making the least inquiry, gave Haman his ring, which would authorize any measure which he might choose to adopt; and Haman immediately circulated the sanguinary edict, to the great horror of the Jews, and the consternation of the whole empire. On this, Mordecai took measures for communicating with Esther, apprised her of the ruin which hung over her nation, and urged her to attempt intercession with the king. And whilst Esther was doing all in her power to arrange a favorable opportunity for pleading the cause of her people, there happened the singular circumstance recorded in the text: his sleep went from the king; and in place of sending for music, or other blandishments, to soothe him to repose, he desired to hear portions of the chronicles of the empire. Amongst other things, the account of the conspiracy which Mordecai had discovered, was read to him; this suggested inquiry as to whether Mordecai had been recompensed; this again produced an order for his being instantly and signally honored—an order which, as intrusted to Haman, was but the too certain herald of that favorite's downfall. Things

now went on rapidly in favor of the Jews: the villany of Haman was disclosed to the king: immediate vengeance followed; and very shortly the people, who had stood within an ace of destruction, had gladness and light in their dwellings, and were all the more prosperous through the defeated plot of their enemies.

Now who can fail to perceive, who can hesitate to confess, the providence of God in the occurrences thus hastily reviewed? From the first, from the advancement of Esther to the throne, a higher than human agency was manifestly at work to counteract a scheme as distinctly foreknown as though God had appointed, in place of only permitting, the sin. The conspiracy of the two chamberlains; the subsequent neglect of Mordecai; the distant season determined by the lot—these were all either ordered, or overruled, by God; and had a part, more or less direct, in frustrating a plot which aimed at nothing less than the extinction of the Jews. But perhaps the most memorable of the evidences of God's special providence is that narrated in the text. There is nothing, indeed, surprising in the mere circumstance that the king passed a sleepless night; it may have arisen from many natural causes; and we are not at all required to hold that there was anything miraculous, anything out of the ordinary course, in his finding himself unable to sleep. But if there were nothing expressly done to banish slumber from his eyes, we may safely say that advantage was taken of the sleeplessness of the king, and that it was suggested to him to do what he was little likely to have thought of. How improbable that, as he tossed from side to side, and could not find rest, he should have fancied the being read to out of the chronicles of the empire, a dry narrative it may be, of facts with which he was already well acquainted, and which had little to interest a voluptuary like himself. When Darius had allowed Daniel to be cast into the lions' den, and was "sore displeased with himself" for what he had done, we read that "instruments of music were not brought before him:" as if, under ordinary circumstances, some such means as the cadences of melody would have been used to cheat him into slumber. But Abasuerus, though the whole his-

tory proves him to have been a thorough sensualist, sent not for music, but for the chronicles of the kingdom; indeed, it was at the prompting of another spirit than his own, or, if it were but the whim of the moment, God made it instrumental to the most important of purposes.

Then, when the chronicles were brought, it was not likely that the part relating to Mordecai would be read. It might have been expected that the reader would turn to portions of the records which were not so well known, as better fitted to divert and interest the king. Besides, it is evident enough that Mordecai was no favorite with the other royal servants; they were disposed to pay court to Haman, and therefore to side with him in his quarrel with this refractory Jew. It was probable, then, that the reader would avoid the account of what Mordecai had done, not wishing that the king should be reminded of his signal, but unrequited, services. Yet, notwithstanding all the chances—to use common language—against the recital of Mordecai's deed, the narrative of this deed was brought before the king, and its effect was an inquiry as to the reward of the man who had been so eminently useful. And thus, by a succession of improbabilities, but not one of those improbabilities so great as to seem to require any supernatural interference, was a result brought round, or at least advanced, which mightily concerned, not only the Jewish nation, but the whole human race; for had the plan of Haman succeeded, and that people been exterminated whence Messiah was to spring, where would have been the promised redemption of this earth and its guilty inhabitants?

It is hardly affirming too much, to affirm that on the sleepless night of the Persian king was made to depend our rescue from everlasting death; at least, and undeniably, the restlessness of the king was one of those instruments through which God wrought in carrying on his purpose of redeeming our race through a descendant from David "according to the flesh." Wonderful, that so simple, so casual a circumstance should have had a direct bearing on the destinies of men from Adam to the very latest posterity! wonderful, that the disturbed and broken rest of a single individual should have aided the reconcil-

iation of the whole world to God! Let us contemplate the fact with yet closer attention. We wish to impress on you a strong sense of the ever-watchful providence of God, of his power in overruling all things, so that they subserve his fixed purposes, and of the facility wherewith he can produce amazing results, through simple instrumentality. Whither then shall we lead you? Not to any strange or startling scene, where there are clear tokens of Divine interference and supremacy. Come with us merely to the couch of the Persian king, on that night when sleep went from his eyes; and remembering that his sleeplessness was directly instrumental to the defeating the foul plot of Haman, let us consider what facts are established by the exhibition, and what practical lessons it furnishes to ourselves.

My brethren, examine your notions of God, and tell me whether you are not apt to measure the Supreme Being by standards established between man and man. The Divine greatness is regarded as that of some very eminent king: what would be inconsistent with the dignity of the potentate is regarded as inconsistent with the dignity of God; and what seems to us to contribute to that dignity is carried up to the heavenly courts, or supposed to exist there in the highest perfection. We do not say that men are to be blamed for thus aiding their conceptions of Deity by the facts and figures of an earthly estate. Limited as our faculties are, and unsuited to comprehend what is spiritual—confined, moreover, as we are to a material world—it is, in a measure, unavoidable that we should picture God in human shape, or rather, that we should take the standards which subsist among ourselves, and use them in representing, or setting forth, our Maker. But we should often gain a grander and a juster idea of God, by considering in what he differs from men, than by ascribing to him, only in an infinite degree, what is found amongst ourselves. You may picture God as a potentate with boundless resources at his disposal, possessed of universal dominion, and surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand ministering spirits, each waiting to do his pleasure, and each mighty as that angel of death which prostrated, in a single night, the vast hosts of the As-

syrian. There is nothing wrong in this representation of Deity, except that it must come immeasurably short of the reality: it is correct as far as it goes; but when we have heaped figure upon figure, attributing to God every conceivable instrument of power, we have, indeed, depicted him as mighty, in the sense in which an earthly monarch may be mighty; but, virtually, we can have made no approach towards the actual state of that omnipotent Being, who “sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.”

And, after all, it is not by putting unbounded resources at the disposal of God, and representing him as working through stupendous instrumentality, that we frame the highest notions of him as a sovereign or ruler. Keep out of sight the unbounded resources, the stupendous instrumentality; survey him as effecting what he wills through a mean and insignificant agency; and you more separate between the Creator and the creature, and therefore go nearer, it may be, to the true idea of God. There is something sublimer and more overwhelming in those sayings of Scripture, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength;” “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;” than in the most magnificent and gorgeous description of dominion and strength. This is just what the earthly potentate cannot do; he must have causes proportionate to effects, agencies commensurate with results; and it were utterly vain for him to think of ordaining strength from babes and sucklings, or confounding wise things with foolish, or mighty with weak. This is the prerogative of Deity alone; and because in this he is altogether separated from his creatures, therefore is this more a sign or attribute of Deity, than any assemblage of forces which Scripture may mention, or any celestial army which imagination can array.

Observe, then, how wonderful is God, in that he can accomplish great ends by insignificant means. Christianity, for example, diffused through the instrumentality of twelve legions of angels, would have been immeasurably inferior,

as a trophy of Omnipotence, to christi-
 anity diffused through the instrumental-
 ity of twelve fishermen. When I sur-
 vey the heavens, with their glorious
 troop of stars, and am told that the Al-
 mighty employs to his own majestic
 ends the glittering hosts as they pursue
 their everlasting march, I experience no
 surprise: I seem to feel as though the
 spangled firmament were worthy of be-
 ing employed by the Creator; and I ex-
 pect a magnificent consummation from
 so magnificent an instrumentality. But
 show me a tiny insect, just floating in
 the breeze, and tell me, that, by and
 through that insect, will God carry for-
 ward the largest and most stupendous
 of his purposes, and I am indeed filled
 with amazement; I cannot sufficiently
 admire a Being, who, through that which
 I could crush with a breath, advances
 what I cannot measure with thought.
 And is there any thing strained or in-
 correct in associating with an insect the
 redemption of the world? Nay, not so.
 In saving the race whence Messiah was
 to spring, God worked through the dis-
 turbed sleep of the Persian monarch,
 and the buzz of an inconsiderable insect
 might have sufficed to break that mon-
 arch's repose.

You have another instance in Scrip-
 ture of an attempt to destroy the chosen
 seed, and thus to frustrate the promises
 in which the whole world had interest.
 It was made by Pharaoh, king of Egypt,
 who, not content with enslaving and op-
 pressing the Israelites, sought to effect
 their extinction through destroying all
 their male children. And when God in-
 terfered on behalf of his people, it was
 with miracle and prodigy, with a mighty
 hand and a stretched-out arm. Every
 one seems to feel that the agency was
 here adequate to the exigence: when
 the very scheme of redemption may be
 said to have been in jeopardy, no one is
 surprised, either that God came forth
 from his solitude clad in his might, or
 that, interposing in so awful a manner,
 he should have confounded and scatter-
 ed his enemies. The interposition re-
 sembled what might have been looked
 for from an earthly king, who, finding
 his will obstructed in some province of
 his empire, should hasten thither with
 his armies, and subdue by superior
 might the rebels and antagonists. But
 when the peril was greater and more

immediate, for certainly the project of
 Haman threatened worse than that of
 Pharaoh, there was no miracle—no
 prodigy: swarms of flies did not darken
 the land, though perhaps a single fly
 was made use of by God. Yet who
 does not perceive that herein was the
 wonderfulness of God more displayed,
 than in all the supernatural terrors which
 devastated Egypt? Let it be, that God
 caused Ahasuerus to be sleepless, or
 only knew that he would be; that he
 prompted him to send for the chronicles,
 or only knew that he would send; that
 he secretly suggested to the reader what
 parts to take, or simply foresaw his se-
 lection—in either case what a tissue of
 insignificant causes is here! but, at the
 same time, what a Being must that be,
 who could hang a world on such a web,
 any thread of which might have been
 broken by a thought, but not without
 deranging and dislocating the whole!
 To have interfered with visible miracle,
 would have been nothing compared to
 the thus secretly and silently operating
 through natural and inconsiderable
 things. Indeed, it was a display of De-
 ity, when the oppressors of Israel quail-
 ed before a power which strewed the
 earth with ruin, and shrouded the hea-
 vens in darkness. But it accords with
 our notions of greatness, that mighty
 means should be employed to mighty
 ends: if God have at his disposal the
 thunder, the storm, and the pestilence,
 we marvel not, that, by employing such
 artillery, he should frustrate the plots of
 the enemies of his church. Can he dis-
 pense with this artillery? can he work
 without miracles, when some great crisis
 arrives, and the counsels of eternity
 seem on the eve of defeat? Indeed he
 can. He is too great to find any instru-
 ment little. He can work with the in-
 sect's wing just as well as with the arch-
 angel's. And, after adoring him, as he
 passes through Egypt in the chariot of his
 strength, working out the emancipation
 of his people by portents and plagues, I
 fall before him as yet more amazing in
 wisdom and power, when I find the
 bloody purpose of Haman defeated
 through such instrumentality as this;
 "The king could not sleep, and he com-
 manded to bring the book of the records
 of the chronicles, and they were read
 before the king."

Now we omitted a circumstance, in

our hasty summary of the facts of the history, which ought to be pointed out, that you may thoroughly perceive the workings of divine Providence. At the very moment that the king was listening to the chronicles of the empire, the wicked Haman was standing in the court, waiting for an audience. He had risen early that he might prefer a request to the king, a request for the immediate execution of Mordecai. At the suggestion of his wife, he had caused a gallows to be erected, and now sought the royal permission for hanging the object of his inveterate hatred. Only remember with what facility the king had granted Haman's request, when it asked the destruction of thousands, and you will hardly think it likely that he would have shown any hesitation in consenting to the death of a solitary individual, and that, too, an individual already doomed by the issued decree. And if Mordecai had fallen, it does not indeed necessarily follow that Esther would have failed in her intercession with the king; but it is not too much to suppose that she would have been staggered and paralyzed through the loss of her kinsman and adviser, and perhaps have taken his death as an evidence of the uselessness of resisting the insolent Haman. Mordecai was, humanly speaking, the great obstruction to the execution of Haman's plot; and, this having been removed, unless some new counteracting engines had been set at work by God, the whole nation of the Jews must have simultaneously perished. Thus it was, you perceive, precisely at the critical moment that his sleep went from the king; the sleepless night saved Mordecai, and Mordecai saved the nation. We have not, then, put the case too strongly, in representing the scheme of the redemption of the world as having depended on the restlessness of the monarch of Persia. We do not, of course, mean to say, that, had the king slept through the night, God would not have employed some other instrumentality in furthering his purpose of mercy towards men. But we have only to do with instrumentality actually employed: and, indeed, it is unbecoming in us even to suppose the case that the king might have slept; for this is to suppose that God's foreknowledge might have been at fault, a contingency having been reckoned upon which had never

arisen. It was clearly, therefore, so ordered by Providence, that the deliverance of the Jews, and, with it, the redemption of the world, should hinge on the fact of his sleep going on one particular night from Ahasuerus, the monarch of Persia.

And having already called on you to admire the wonderfulness of God, in that he could operate to so mighty an end through so inconsiderable an agency, we would have you carefully observe how little there was which could be called supernatural interference; how simply, without any violence, the divine Providence effected its purpose. Now that the whole is over, we can clearly trace the hand of God: but, whilst the matter was in progress, we might have discerned nothing but ordinary and every-day events, such as afforded no sign of the interference of Deity. We have not taken on ourselves to decide whether God actually caused, or only foreknew, the king's sleepless night; whether he turned the king's mind towards the chronicles of the empire, or merely foresaw its direction. But let it be supposed, as is sufficiently probable, that there was more than foreknowledge, that God banished sleep from the king's eyes, and directed his thoughts to the chronicles, how natural was the whole thing! how little interference was there with the usual course of events! No one could have suspected that a divine agency was at work: it was no ways singular that the king should be restless: no miracle was required to explain his choosing to hear the records of his empire: every thing was just what might have equally happened, had matters been left to themselves, in place of having been disposed and directed by God.

We wish you to observe this very carefully, because it goes to the setting under a right point of view the utility of prayer, which is often objected against as though it sought miracles, or expected God to interrupt, at our call, the established course and order of things. The Jews, at the bidding of Esther, had given themselves to fasting and prayer, supplicating of the Almighty that she might be favorably received of the king, and thus enabled to adopt measures for discomfiting Haman. And independently on this set supplication on behalf of the queen, we may be sure, that, no sooner

had the edict gone forth which doomed them to death, than the Jews betook themselves to prayer to the God of their fathers, imploring of him that he would vanquish their foes, and not suffer the promises to fail, of which, for centuries, they had been the depository. And perhaps they looked for visible and miraculous interference in answer to their prayers: it had been God's course, in other emergencies, to make bare his arm in defence of his people: might he not now be expected to appear in his terrors, and scatter, by the brightness of his presence, whatsoever had leagued against his church and himself? But they looked in vain, if they looked for sensible evidence that God had not forgotten his covenant: there came no prodigy to sustain their sinking spirits: if Mordecai appeared raised up, as Moses had been, to counsel and lead them in their difficulties; alas! he had not the rod of the lawgiver to wave over the land, and make oppressors tremble.

Was God, then, not hearkening to prayer? was he not intending, or preparing, to answer it? Indeed, his ear was open to the cry of his people, and the event sufficiently showed that he had, all along, been working for their safety. But, as though to prove to us that, even in the worst extremity, he may interpose on our behalf, and nevertheless not derange the common order of things: he frustrated the apparently secure plot of Haman without the least approach to a miracle. And do you not perceive what encouragement this affords in the matter of prayer, and how it scatters the objections which numbers would urge? The scorner would tell me of fixed and immutable laws, according to which things must proceed in regular succession and train: he would persuade me of the utter absurdity of addressing petitions to God, seeing that, if he answer them, it must be by interfering with what is settled and constant, by the working of miracles, which, from their very nature, he cannot often work. But it is a false statement. I do not look for miracle to be wrought in answer to prayer—though, all the while, I thoroughly believe that, were a case to arise in which nothing short of miracle would meet the circumstances of a servant of God, the miracle would not be withheld: stars shall forsake their courses, the sun and

the moon shall put on sackcloth, ere any thing shall fail which God has promised to the righteous, and which is needful to their steadfastness or progress. But it is not required that there should be miracle in order to our prayers being granted; neither does the granting them suppose that God is variable, or changes in his purposes. There was no miracle in his causing Ahasuerus to pass a sleepless night: a little heat in the atmosphere, or the buzzing of an insect, might have produced the result; and philosophy, with all its sagacity, could not have detected any interruption of the known laws of nature. Neither were God's purposes variable, though it may have actually depended on the importunity of prayer, whether or not the people should be delivered. God's appointment may have been, that he would break the king's sleep if prayer reached a certain intensity; that he would not break it if it came below that intensity: and surely, this would accord equally with two propositions—the first, that the divine purposes are fixed and immutable; the second, that notwithstanding this fixedness and immutability, they may be affected by human petitions, and therefore leave room for importunate prayer.

And thus I am mightily encouraged in all the business of prayer by the broken rest of the Persian king. Comparatively, I should not be encouraged, were I told that what disquieted the monarch had been the standing of a spectre by his bedside, an unearthly form, which, in unearthly accents, had upbraided him with leaving Mordecai unrequited. Here would have been miracle, a departure from ordinary laws; and I know that such departure must be necessarily rare, and could hardly be looked for in any exigence of mine own. But when I observe that the king's rest was disturbed without any thing supernatural; that all which God had to do in order to arrange a great deliverance for his people, was to cause a sleepless night, but so to cause it that no one could discern his interference; then, indeed, I learn that I may not be asking what the world counts miracle, though I ask what transcends all power but divine. It may be by natural processes that God effects what might pass for supernatural results. Shall I not cry for deliverance from the dungeon into which a tyrant has cast me, or from the tempest

which has overtaken me? Shall I be silent, because it were like asking for miracle, to ask that the prison doors might be loosened, or for interruption of the known laws of nature, to entreat that the agitated elements might be hushed? Nay, not so. God, who succored the Jews through giving one man a sleepless night, may, by the dropping of a pin, incline the tyrant to release me, or, by a feather's weight in those laboratories which science never penetrated, repress the rushings of the storm. I am delivered from the dungeon, I am saved from the tempest, without exciting the surprise of the world, because without any palpable derangement of the common order of things; but nevertheless through an express answer to prayer, or a direct interference on the part of the Almighty.

Oh, there is something in this which should be wondrously encouraging to all who feel their insignificance, and can scarce venture to think that the high and glorious God will exert his omnipotence on their behalf. If the registered deliverances, vouchsafed to the church, were all deliverances which had been effected through miracles, we might question whether they afforded any precedent, on which creatures like ourselves could justly rest hope. We dare not think that for us, for our safety or advancement, armed squadrons will be seen on the heavens, or the earth be convulsed, or the waters turned into blood. But look from Israel delivered from Pharaoh to Israel delivered from Haman, and we are encouraged to believe that God will not fail even us in our extremity, seeing that he could save the people through such a simple and unsuspected process as this: "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded, to bring the book of the records of the chronicles."

But we would now lead you along a train of thought quite different from the preceding, but naturally flowing from the circumstances under review. We wish you again, and more distinctly, to observe, that, even on the supposition that God produced, and did not merely overrule what took place, there was nothing to excite a consciousness of Divine interference: the whole process was so natural that its subject might never have suspected the special workings of God. It cannot for a moment be alleged, that any thing like compulsion was laid upon the

king, that his free agency was destroyed, so that he was necessitated, against his will, to adopt a particular course. It was not indeed optional with Abasuerus whether or not he would be wakeful; neither was it at his own choice, whether or not the thought should cross his mind of sending for the chronicles of the empire; but we may fairly suppose that he could have resisted this thought had he pleased. He might have said to himself, "These chronicles will never soothe me to sleep: I will try something better suited to my purpose"—and thus might he have withstood the impulse, and lost the opportunity of discovering and correcting his faults. We do not of course mean, as we have hinted before, that Haman's plot would not have been defeated, had the king not done according to the suggestion of God. God designed that the plot should be defeated; and he would, therefore, have been sure to bring to bear an adequate instrumentality. But the point under consideration is, that the agency employed on the king was so natural, so undistinguishable from the workings of his own mind, that he could never have suspected a Divine interference, and must have been perfectly at liberty either to do, or not to do, as the secret impulse prescribed.

And in this, my brethren, we have a striking illustration of God's ordinary course in his dealings with men—those dealings, we specially mean, through which he would effect their conversion or renewal. If you examine theoretically into the consistence of human liberty with the operations of Divine grace—if, that is, you seek to show, with thorough precision, that the influences of God's Spirit on our minds in no degree interfere with free agency—it is possible that you will involve yourselves in a labyrinth, and seek vainly for the clue by which you might be extricated. But, practically, there is no difficulty whatsoever in the matter: we may fairly say, that, whilst suggestions are secretly generated, and impulses applied to our minds, we are thoroughly at liberty to act as we choose: it depends on ourselves, on the exercise of our own will, whether the suggestions be cherished or crushed, whether the impulses be withstood or obeyed. And we know nothing of which it is more important that men be aware, than of the naturalness, so to speak, of the Spirit's opera-

tions; for many are disposed to wait for what they count supernatural influence—influence which shall palpably not be of this earth, and which shall virtually leave them no freedom of choice. But without denying that cases sometimes occur, in which the operations of the Spirit thus force attention to their origin, it is unquestionable that his ordinary operations are just such as may pass for the workings of our own minds: there is nothing in them to tell us, that we are, at that moment, being subjected to the agency of Omnipotence; nothing to excite the startling conviction, that we are verily wrought upon by that renovating power, which is to mould out of fallen humanity a habitation for Deity himself. And because the operations of the Spirit are commonly not distinguishable from those of our own minds, the danger is very great of their being overlooked or despised; and the duty is, therefore, most pressing, of our being ever on the watch for his suggestions and impulses.

The position of the unconverted man is often precisely that of the king Ahasuerus. There is a restlessness, an uneasiness, for which he cannot give any definite reason; it has come upon him, he hardly knows whence; and he turns from side to side, expecting to recover his moral indifference or composure. But still his sleep goes from him, and he bethinks him of measures for wooing it back. When he has been similarly situated before, he has perhaps had recourse to the fascinations of the world; he has summoned pleasure with her lyre, and syren strains have soothed him into quiet. Shall he take the same course now! It would be natural that he should; but he feels a sort of disposition to try another mode; it is secretly suggested to him that the book of the record of the chronicles might give him some repose, that the Bible might hush his agitation, were it read to him by those whose office it is to press home its truths. And thus is he literally situated as was the Persian king on that eventful night, when the fate of the Jews, and of the world, seemed to hang upon a thread. He is acted on as was the king; and there is nothing to prevent his resisting as the king might have resisted. He may say to himself, "The Bible is a dull book, preachers are melancholy persons; I will try something more likely to dissipate my fears,

and restore my composure: give me the romance, or the comedy, rather than the book of the chronicles; give me my jovial companions, rather than the ministers of religion." Ahasuerus might have done this, and thereby would he have resisted promptings which were not of his own mind, though they gave no note of supernatural origin, and have lost the opportunity of freeing his kingdom from a great impending calamity. And the sinner may do this: he may withstand a suggestion, which seems only to spring from a disturbed mind, though in truth to be traced to the Spirit of God; and thus may he throw away a golden opportunity of learning how to flee from everlasting wrath.

The special thing forced on the conscience of Ahasuerus through the book of the chronicles, was, that there was one who had done him great service in saving him from death, and whom he had hitherto requited with neglect. And it is the very same thing which might be forced on the conscience of the sinner through the reading or hearing of the Bible. There is one who has done for him what thought cannot measure, ransoming him, by "the death of the cross," from everlasting pains; but he has hitherto refused to acknowledge this Savior, and has given him, in return, only hatred or contempt. So accurately is a case of most common occurrence, that of the unconverted man moved by God's Spirit to give heed to the Gospel of Christ, portrayed in that of the Persian king, prompted, in his restlessness, to hear the chronicles of the empire. And what we would again and again impress upon you is, that you are not to think of recognizing the operations of the Spirit of God by any supernatural tokens, as though, whensoever that agent is at work in your breasts, you must be aware of his presence, and able to distinguish his movements from those of the conscience and the will. The secret uneasiness, the impulse to prayer, the sense of something wrong, the disposition to hear the word of God—these may not startle you by their strangeness; these may seem to you quite natural, as naturally produced as suggestions of an opposite character—but know ye of a truth, that these are what the Holy Ghost causes; that these may perhaps be all which the Holy Ghost will cause;

and, therefore, that if ye will not yield to these, and will not act on these, there is a fearful probability of your being forsaken of God, and left to your own devices. Wait not for miracles—God's ordinary workings are through very simple means. We do not read of any thunderclap which awakened Ahasuerus; he was restless, but perhaps could give no account of his restlessness. If he had been asked, he would probably have mentioned the heat of the weather, or over-excitement, or something of which he had eaten. But, all the while, God was in that sleeplessness, for which so many common causes might have been assigned. And there must be those of you who already know, or who will know, something of a moral uneasiness which might admit of various explanations. There has been no thunderclap

—yet the man cannot sleep; and he will perhaps account for it from some loss in his family, or some disappointment in trade, or some deficiency in health. But God is in that uneasiness, that disquietude, which shows an inability to settle down in present things, and a secret craving for higher and better. Well then—whensoever such a season shall visit any amongst you, let them be specially heedful of what may be suggested to their minds; they are not disturbed for nothing, but that they may be prompted and urged towards religion—no music, no revelry, no blandishments: let the records of the chronicles of the kingdom of heaven be searched, and they shall learn how the snare may be broken, and beautiful peace be permanently secured.

S E R M O N V I I .

THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM.

“And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink of it.”—2SAM. xxiii. 15, 16, 17.

We are not to regard the scriptural histories as mere registers of facts, such as are commonly the histories of eminent men: they are rather selections of facts, suitableness for purposes of instruction having regulated the choice. In human biography, you may say of much that is recorded, that it is inserted only because it happened, and because, therefore, its omission would have destroyed the integrity of the narrative. But we do not suppose that the same may be said of scriptural biography; a fact is not recorded merely because it occurred, as

though the object were to give the full life of some distinguished individual; a fact is rather chosen for relation, out of many which are omitted, because exhibiting some point, whether in human conduct or the divine dealings, on which it is important that attention be turned.

Occasionally, indeed, and perhaps more frequently than is commonly thought, it is because the fact has a typical character that it is selected for insertion: it prefigures, or symbolically represents, something connected with the scheme of redemption, and on this

account has found place in the sacred volume. Neither is it unusual for the recorded fact to answer to both these descriptions; being instructive in itself, and serving also as an emblem of truths that were then taught only by shadows and types. And whether, in any given instance, it be that the thing narrated is instructive in itself, or significative of what God had yet but partially disclosed; or whether it may lay claim to both characters; we ought, at least, to be careful that we content not ourselves with apprehending the facts, but study diligently what lessons they may convey, and what types they may contain.

We make these general remarks from a fear that, in regard especially of the Old Testament narratives, there is a habit with many christians of reading scriptural histories as registers of facts, rather than as collections of lessons. The interesting character of the narratives themselves is often likely to induce or strengthen this habit; the mind becomes so engaged with the story, that the instruction is disregarded, or the figure overlooked. There are others besides children who can be pleased with the fable, and never think of the moral. And if we fail to search the scriptural narratives for lessons and types, it is evident that we shall practically take away from great part of the Bible its distinctive character as a record of spiritual truth; whilst, on the other hand, by always looking for what always exists—material of instruction—we may give histories the nature of homilies, and find the events in an individual's life prophetic of things in which the whole world has interest.

We hope to show you, as we proceed with our discourse, that the narrative which we have now selected from the Old Testament, forms no exception to the rule, but rather signally illustrates its truth. It is exactly one of those narratives which are likely to be read and admired for the beauty of the facts, rather than studied for the worth of the lessons. It lays immediate and strong hold on the imagination, having about it that air of chivalry, we might almost say romance, which ordinarily so captivates and dazzles the fancy. You can hardly read it and not have before you all the scenery of the tented field, with the mailed champions and the floating banners.

The royal warrior, David, is exhausted with the fight; he has been in the thick of the struggle with the Philistines, and is now faint with thirst. In this his weariness and languor, he is heard to breath a passionate wish for water from the well of Bethlehem, between which and himself lay the Philistines, so that the well could be reached only by breaking through their line. But amongst his followers were men as attached as intrepid; with hearts devoted to their chieftain, and hand prepared to attempt even impossibilities at his bidding. Three of the most distinguished of these followers heard the wish which David expressed. There was no command given: but with them a wish had the force of a command; and pausing not to count the peril, they rushed against the foe, resolved to carve themselves a passage. It was like rushing on destruction—what will their courage and strength avail against a multitude! they will be borne down in the unequal struggle; and even if they reach the well their retreat will be cut off, and they must perish in the effort to return. And yet—so did the Almighty favor the bold enterprise—they succeeded in breaking through the host: you may trace their course by the stir, the tumult, and the crash; the enemy falls in heaps before them; now they are by the side of the cold flowing fountain; they stay not to quench their own thirst: they dip, it may be a helmet in the waters, and hasten, with that warrior's cup to attempt a second time the passage. Perhaps the Philistines scarcely offer fresh resistance; these three men may have seemed to them more than mortal; they may have divided at their approach, and allowed them to return unopposed to the army of Israel.

And David must have been aware of this desperate sally; he must have known that the choicest of his warriors had thrown themselves, to all appearance, on certain death, in hopes of gratifying his wish; and deep must have been his anxieties, and fervent his prayers, for those whom his inconsiderateness had placed in such peril. But the shout of his troops tells him that his brave captains are safe; they approach, stained with the blood of the Philistines, and perhaps with their own: they bow before their king, present the sparkling draught, and ask no reward but the pleasure of seeing him refreshed. And David holds the helmet

in his hands, but raises it not to his lips : the thirst consumes him, for it has been aggravated through the feverish dread that the bold men would perish ; but the water, fresh and pure though it was, looked to him like the blood of those who had jeopardied their lives ; he felt compunction at having rashly given utterance to a wish which had produced so daring a deed ; and he will punish himself for the fault ; he refuses to drink, and pours the water on the ground as a libation to the Lord.

What a picture ! Every one is familiar with the story of our own warrior, who, mortally wounded, and parched with the death-thirst, received a cup of water, but observing, as he raised it to his lips, the eye of a dying soldier rest wistfully upon it, handed it to him and bade him drink it, as needing it yet more than himself. But we know not whether the history before us do not present a still finer subject for the painter. It does not seem as though David had to choose between quenching his own thirst and that of another. There may have been no gasping warrior at his feet to move sympathy by the glassy eye and the clotted lip. It was simply at the suggestion of conscience that he put from him the longed-for draught ; and there was all the more of greatness, because there was apparently so little to prompt the self-denial.

But we need not take pains to give interest and coloring to the narrative. The risk, as we have hinted, is all the other way—that you may be so attracted by the chivalrous circumstances, by the displayed bravery and magnanimity, as to think nothing of homely and personal lessons with which the registered incidents are assuredly fraught. We have, therefore, now to engage you exclusively with these lessons. We wish you to observe what there may have been to blame, and what to approve, in the conduct of David ; and to note, with like attention, the conduct of his servants. This sufficiently defines what we have to attempt through the remainder of our discourse ; we will take, first, the conduct of the three warriors, and, secondly, that of David, and examine what, in each case, there may be whether to condemn or to copy.

Now the three warriors must be surveyed as servants of David, men engaged to obey his commands, and execute his will to the utmost of their power. And

their conduct then appears very admirable, as far removed as can well be imagined from that calculating and niggardly obedience, which betrays a disposition to do the least possible, to render as little to a master as that master can be prevailed on to accept. We need not touch the question as to whether these warriors were justified in running such a risk, whether it were unlawful, or not, to make the attempt to which they were prompted by the expressed wish of David. It may have been unlawful ; there must have been a point at which obedience to God would have forbidden obedience to their king ; but we have no means for accurately judging whether this point had been reached in the case now before us. We may, therefore, waive all reference to the right or the wrong, of the resolve to cut a path to the waters of Bethlehem ; we have simply to do with the power which a mere wish of David had over his servants, for we may hence derive a lesson for all servants, whether of God or of man.

You are to observe that David issued no command. He might have summoned the bravest of his battalions, and bidden them attempt the forcing a passage to the well ; but nothing of the kind was done : he simply uttered a wish, without, perhaps, thinking that he should be overheard, and certainly without designing that it should be interpreted as a command. But the wish was sufficient for bold and true-hearted men, and they instantly faced death to attempt its gratification. And we say of these servants, thus yielding as ready an obedience to an overheard wish as could have been rendered to the most positive order, that they rebuke many of ourselves, who, whether it be their Creator, or their fellow-creatures, by whom they are employed, seem only anxious to reduce their service to the smallest possible amount. There is an example set by these warriors to every man who is called on for obedience, which fits the history before us to be inscribed on our kitchens, our shops, and our churches. The example lies in their not having waited for a command, but acted on a wish ; and there is no man to whom the term servant applies—and it applies to every man, at least with reference to God—who would not do well to ponder the example, and consider whether he be not yet far below such a model.

If you take the case of servants, as the term is commonly applied, is not their service, for the most part, a sort of labor to do no more than they can help, an endeavor to earn their wages with as little outlay of toil as their employers will consent to remunerate? Servants, even servants "professing godliness," seem to have practically but little remembrance of the precept of St. Paul, "not with eye-service as men-pleasers." It is almost all "eye-service," and flags in proportion as inspection is withdrawn. It is a rare thing to find a servant who will diligently obey your commands; but where shall we look for one who will carefully consult your wishes? And we do not know that a more annoying argument is to be found against the advantageousness of a diffused christian education, than is apparently furnished by a fact which it is not easy to gainsay, that, in place of an improved race of servants having resulted from an improved system of general instruction, we have less diligent, less obliging, and less trustworthy domestics. We are sure as to the unsoundness of the argument, because we are sure, on unassailable principles, that the knowledge of God in Christ will make men, from the prince to the peasant, fitter for whatsoever duties appertain to their station. But, nevertheless, when the appeal is to results, to the testimony of experience, not of theory, it does involve the advocate of national education in no ordinary difficulty, that the opponent can enter our households and ask, with much semblance of truth, what, comparatively, has become of those attached, steadfast, and conscientious servants, who had no interest separate from their master's, and no wish but that of executing his? And servants who have enjoyed all the superior advantages of modern days, and yet are palpably inferior to the servants of former—restless, rude, dishonest—little know how much they may contribute towards such disgust amongst the rich at the instruction of the poor, as will prompt an endeavor to re-establish the ignorance which consisted with something praiseworthy, as preferable to the knowledge which threatens to issue in confusion.

Neither is it only to servants, in the common sense of the word that the example before us applies. The same holds good generally of the employed,

whatever the nature of the employment. It ought to be the ruling principle with him who serves another in any capacity, to serve him upon principle, to identify himself with his employer, and to have the same eye to his interests as though they were his own. If a man buy my time, and I do not devote to him that time, there is robbery as actual as though he had bought my merchandize and I then sold it to another. If he pay me for my labor, and I in any measure withhold it, then, up to that measure, there is as palpable fraud as if he bargained for my goods and I used a false balance. The indolent clerk, the idle shopman, the careless agent—I see no moral difference between these and the grossly dishonest who tamper with the property of their employers. And if a general rule be required for the guidance of those who are in any kind of service, we fetch it from the example of David's three captains, with whom a wish had all the force of a command. It is not that this rule will furnish specific direction in each specific case; but that he, who acts up to it, will be keeping in exercise the motives and dispositions which will ensure the right course under all possible circumstances. He who consults wishes as well as commands, or with whom a known wish is as binding as an express command, will necessarily feel at all times under the eye of his employer; or rather, will know no difference when that eye is upon him and when turned away. His whole aim will be to act for the employer as the employer would act for himself; and it is evident that nothing can be added to such a description, if you wish to include singleness of purpose, sincerity, diligence, and faithfulness.

And you have only to contrast, in your own minds, the servant who will do nothing but what is positively, and, in so many words, commanded, and another who watches the very looks of his master, that he may read his wishes and take them for laws, to assure yourselves that the feature of good service which we derive from the conduct of the captains of David rather gives the whole character than a solitary mark. Yea, consider men in general as the servants of God—of God who expressly says, "I will guide thee with mine eye," as though a look were to suffice; and this

feature will distinguish the true and the earnest from the hypocritical and the lukewarm. Let us ask ourselves whether, unhappily, it be not the too common disposition of those who make profession of godliness, to pare down as much as possible the service required at their hands, to calculate how small a sacrifice, and how slight an endurance, will consist with their being reckoned amongst the members of Christ? In place of a generous zeal to give up everything for God, and such a fear of offending him as would make them avoid what is indifferent lest they indulge in what is wrong, men are apt to compute how far they may venture in compliance with the world, how near they may go to the forbidden thing, and yet not lose the distinctive character of the people of Christ. It should not content the christian that such or such an indulgence is not prohibited by the letter of the law; he should search whether it be not prohibited by the spirit. In cases where there really may be a doubt as to the lawfulness, he should determine for the course which is the most likely to be right; and, if the scales hang even, for that to which he has the less inclination. This would be true christian obedience, an obedience of which love is the law. God dealeth with us as with children rather than servants—not laying down an express precept for every possible case, but supposing in us a principle which will always lead to our considering what will be pleasing to himself, and to our taking his pleasure as our rule. And just as the affectionate child will watch the countenance of the parent, obeying what he reads there as well as what he hears from the lip, so should the christian search for the least indication of God's will and give it all the force of a positive statute.

But can we say that we do this? Can we deny, that, for the most part, we rather compute how little God will take than how much we can give; what may be withheld, than what surrendered? That a thing is doubtful, does not make us shun it as though it were wrong; we are more disposed, under the plea of its being dubious, to adopt it as right. It is not sufficient for us, that God is likely to be better pleased if we abstain than if we indulge; we urge the want of express command, and are secretly gratified

that it does not exist. Alas, then, how are we reproved by the warriors of David? What christians should we be, if, with them, a wish were law enough to arm us against danger and death! Go in thought to the field of battle, where Israel is ranged against the Philistine, when you may feel inclined to evade a painful duty under the plea of its not being distinctly enjoined. When you would excuse yourselves from making a sacrifice, foregoing an indulgence, or attempting a difficulty, by urging, that though it might be acceptable to God, at least he has not made it indispensable, observe what the servants of an earthly king could do in the absence of command, and let the servants of a heavenly blush to do less. Who are these that rush upon the enemy, as though they knew nothing of danger and bore a charm against death? We see three warriors press along the plain; their whole demeanor is that of those charged with some fearful commission; the fate of a kingdom has surely been given into their keeping; they are urging forwards with the desperateness of men bidden, on some authority which they dare not resist, to attempt an enterprise involving the safety of thousands. Not so; these warriors might have remained inactive and yet been guilty of no positive disobedience to their leader. They have received no directions obliging them to draw the sword and hew a passage. They were just in the position in which you yourselves often are, with no command from a master, but with some intimation of a wish. And they are but setting an example to the warriors of Christ—an example as to the taking every indication of the wish, as an expression of the will of our Lord, seeing that they are cutting their way through the hosts of the Philistine, not because they have heard David exclaim, "Unsheath the sword, and dare the foe;" but only because they have heard him say, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem."

But let us now pass from the conduct of the servants to that of David, in which there is matter, as it would seem, for blame as well as praise. You may be sure, that, if we have spoken with something like severity of servants, it has not been in forgetfulness of how much, after all, the goodness of the servant depends

upon the master. We never hear an instance of a domestic growing old in one family, without feeling that it tells well for both sides; if a good master will not keep a bad servant long, neither will a bad master long keep a good. It must, in truth, be through a mutual system of forbearance and accommodation, that anything like harmony is maintained in the several relations of life: to expect always to prescribe, and never to concede, shows an ignorance of human character and condition, which is sure to be visited with opposition and thwarting. They who look to be obeyed cheerfully, must take heed that they command judiciously; the greater the known readiness to comply with their wishes, the greater should be the caution that those wishes be always reasonable and just.

And herein was David much in fault; for, knowing the devotedness of his followers, their attachment to his person, and their uncalculating bravery in his cause, he should have been all the more careful to give utterance to neither a command nor a wish which he had not well weighed, or with which he did not desire a literal compliance. It was not fitting in a man, who had learnt, by experience, that the warm hearts about him would obey his very look, to express a rash longing—and such, at least, was that for water from Bethlehem. We have no reason to suppose that there was no water in the camp, or that none could have been procured from more accessible springs. Perhaps the well of Bethlehem was celebrated for its water; or perhaps David, as having been born and brought up in Bethlehem, had a special affection for the fountain of which he had drunk in his youth. This longing for the well of Bethlehem in an hour of danger and strife, may have been one of those instances of the travelling back of the mind to the days and scenes of boyhood, which are so common and so touching amid the woes and struggles of more advanced life; the fields where we once played seeming to mock us by their greenness, and the well-remembered waters and trees sparkling and waving before the eye, as though to reproach our having abandoned what was so peaceful and pure for the whirl and din of the world. It may have been thus with David: his circumstances were

now harassing and perplexed, and, as he felt his difficulties and perils, the imagery of his youth may have come thronging before him—himself a shepherd-boy, and his flock grazing on the bank of a quiet glassy stream; and it may have been but an expression of something like regret that days were so changed, when he exclaimed, “Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate.”

But, whatever were the uppermost feeling in the mind of David, we may fall back upon our assertion, that, circumstanced as he was, it ought not to have been expressed. Indeed, even had he not had such reason to know that those around him were on the watch for the intimation of his wishes, he would not have been warranted in giving words to a desire, that others would risk life just to gratify himself. There is all the difference between the feeling and the expressing a desire; we are not necessarily answerable for the former—we must be for the latter: even as an evil thought may be darted into the mind, we cannot tell whence, and we be innocent notwithstanding; but the thought cannot be embodied in speech and we not be guilty. If David's wish were harmless, as breathed only to himself, it was not so as declared to his servants: he must have known its gratification impossible, except at the risk of many lives. Not that we suppose that David entertained any thought of his wish being acted upon; in all likelihood it never crossed his mind that the desperate sally would be made. But it is precisely in this that he was to blame; it ought to have crossed his mind: he would not issue a command which he did not mean to be obeyed; neither, circumstanced and surrounded as he was, should he have hinted a wish, if he did not design the gratification to be attempted.

And it is here that we may obtain some general rules which all who have authority would do well to adopt. You see that, in proportion as you are faithfully and affectionately served, you are bound to be careful how you issue a command or breathe a desire. Take it as the perfection of a servant, to be anxious only to know, that he may do, his master's will; and it is the perfection of a master, to manifest no will but what

nis servant may be able, and with good conscience, to perform. There can be no tyranny greater, and none more ungenerous, than that which, taking advantage of the condition or attachment of a domestic, imposes duties which are too severe, or tasks which are unlawful. I may feel that a servant is either so dependent upon me, or so devoted to my wishes, that he will tell a lie at my bidding, and assure the visiter that I am from home when he knows me in the house. But what is to be said of my baseness, my cruelty, in prescribing to a fellow-creature over whom I have some kind of power, that he should do what he cannot do, and not offend the God of truth! I may not actually mean him to tell a lie; I may suppose that there is a sort of conventional understanding in society which causes a certain sense to be put on the phrase which I dictate: but it is too much to expect that the fine-drawn distinction should be perceived by the servant; his feeling must be that he has told a direct falsehood for my sake; and it is hardly reasonable to require that he should not, at other times, tell one for his own.

And this is but a particular case, which may be taken to illustrate the general rule. The general rule is, that, in every command, in every wish, there be due consideration for the ability, the comfort, and the conscience of the domestic. No longing for the water of Bethlehem, if it cannot be had but by strength unduly tasked, time so engrossed that none remains for prayer, or principle so disregarded that man's law supersedes God's.

Neither is this all which should be gathered or inferred from the circumstances under review. You see how easily what was never meant as a command may be received as such, where there is affectionate watchfulness amongst friends and attendants. Then what care should there be, that nothing be said in joke which may be taken in earnest, nothing even hinted at as our belief or desire, which we would not have acted on by those who hear the words. It is specially to children that this remark applies; for they may be supposed to have all that submissiveness to authority, and that willingness to oblige, which distinguished David's warriors, as well as that inability of discriminating a cas-

ual expression from an actual direction, which seems equally to have belonged to the men, who felt themselves bidden to attempt the passage to Bethlehem. The child, from his age, can know little of any figures of speech, and will commonly adopt the literal interpretation; thus, what was never meant to be seriously understood may exert all the force of precept or instruction. In this way may indiscreet conversation, to which they who carry it on attach no importance, and which they never dream of any one's taking as expressing their actual thoughts and feelings, be received by young minds with all the reverence which they are taught to render unto truth. Disciplined to respect their superiors, and, therefore, to attach credit to their words—instructed to obey them implicitly, and, therefore, to consult their very wishes, it can hardly fail but that what is uttered in their presence will pass for true, and what is desired appear worth being sought. And probably children often imbibe opinions, which form the foundation of character, from casual expressions dropped in their hearing, and which, had explanation been asked, they would have found to have been spoken without thought and almost without meaning. Who shall tell us the effect of a joke upon sacred things, the levity of which may have been pardoned by elder persons for the sake of the wit, but the irreverence of which may sink deep into younger, and work a half persuasion that the Bible, after all, is not that awful volume with which it were sacrilege to trifle? Who shall tell us what is done by discourse on the advantageousness of wealth, and by hasty wishes, perhaps thoughtlessly uttered, for larger measure of earthly possessions? The seeds of covetousness may have been sown in the young hearer, when the speaker himself has been indifferent to money; and the child of a parent who is actually content with a little, may grow up with a passion for much, from having overheard the parent talk as though he desired a far ampler fortune.

You may tell us that we assign causes disproportionate to effects: as well tell us that the oak cannot spring from the acorn. Life is made up of little things; and human character, traced to its beginning, will be found issuing from drops

rather than from fountains. You ought, therefore, when speaking before those whom you instruct to respect and obey you, to speak on the supposition that all which you assert will be received as true, all for which you wish be accounted desirable. You must not think aloud, if you do not mean your thoughts to pass for verities or have the weight of commands. If such a rule be neglected, you must not be surprised if they who hear you enter upon the paths which you never meant them to tread, and afterwards plead your authority in excuse. There may again occur precisely what occurred with David and his servants. It is not that the monarch has commanded his warriors to dare death, that they may fetch him water from a favorite spring. It is not that he has even wished them to undertake the rash and perilous enterprise. It is only that, without reflection or thought, he gave utterance to something that was passing in his mind, and that those about him overheard the inconsiderate expression. And do you mark that young person, who is devoting himself with uncalculating eagerness to some worldly pursuit, as though he had been trained to nothing but the acquisition of honor or wealth? Is it that the parent literally instructed him to rush through all danger that he might but grasp the coveted thing? Is it that he was told, in so many words, to give energy, and talent, and time, to the obtaining a perishable good, so that he can urge the precept of a father, whom he loved and revered, as justifying a career in which the object is worthless, if compared with the risk and the toil? Probably not so. The parent never wished him thus to squander his powers; the parent never thought that he would; but that parent, having gained his affections and secured his attention to his commands and his wishes, was little careful as to what he let fall in his hearing; he was apt to say what he did not mean, to give words to feelings which he would never have breathed, had he remembered the possibility of their being received as genuine, or interpreted as laudable; in short, like David, when nothing was further from his wish than that his wish should be acted on, he was used to utter exclamations such as this, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate."

But this only sets before you what appears blame-worthy in the conduct of David; we have yet to consider what there may be to deserve praise or imitation. And this is to be sought in what he did when his followers returned, and placed before him the water for which he had inconsiderately longed. It would not have been strange, or unnatural, had he argued that, though he had done wrong in expressing the wish, it could not be unlawful to use the means of gratifying that wish so unexpectedly provided. He might have said, I would not indeed have exposed the lives of my brave soldiers, in order to obtain this refreshment; but now that, unbidden, and from the warmth of their attachment, they have cut their way to the well, and brought me of its flowings, I may surely quench my thirst, and thus afford them the best reward for their zeal in my service.

But David argued differently, in a manner that showed more of high principle, and strong fear of God. He felt that there was a contradiction, in owning an action wrong, and allowing himself to be advantaged by that action. The least which he could do, in proof of his consciousness of error, was to refuse to appropriate what that error had procured. He must punish himself, by an act of self-denial, for a want of self-command, and show that, if he had been betrayed into expressing a rash wish, he had at least discovered, and repented of, the rashness. And therefore he would not taste the coveted draught, but made it a kind of offering to the Lord, pouring it on the ground, in witness that he had sinned, and that, having sinned, he needed an expiatory ablution.

It is not the heroism of David, in acting thus, which we propose for admiration and imitation, though it may be, as we stated in an earlier part of our discourse, that the monarch, parched with thirst, and yet refusing to touch the water which sparkled so invitingly before him, would form as fine a picture as human story can give of forbearance and greatness. But it is the genuineness of the repentance of David on which we would insist, the sincerity of his piety as proved by his refusal to derive benefit from his sin. We think that herein is he specially an example to ourselves, and that the cases are far from uncommon, in which there is such similarity of cir-

cumstance, as to render the example most direct and appropriate.

It is not fit: a moment to be questioned that a present advantage is often the immediate result of what is wrong, so that, in one way or another, the sin produces what the sinner desires to obtain. If it were not so, if the consequences of doing wrong were never, nay, if they were not frequently, profitable to the individual who does the wrong thing, we hardly know where, in most instances, temptation would lie, or where would be the exercise of virtue. In general it is a balance between the present and the future which we are required to strike: the great task to which we are summoned, is the not allowing ourselves to be overborne by immediate results, so as to keep more distant out of sight, but the calculating what will be for our profit on the whole, visible things and invisible being alike brought into account. And, of course, whilst such is our condition, or such the system of probation beneath which we live, a sort of temporary reward must often be attainable by the sinner: there must be something of advantage to be procured through want of principle, and lost through rigid conscientiousness. Such cases will often occur in the stir and jostle of a mercantile community, where vast interests become so involved, and immense revenues so depend on the turn of a single speculation, that the least underhand dealing might at times fill a man's coffers, and almost a dishonest thought transform him from the poor to the wealthy.

And we are now concerned with the question, as to what is binding on a man, if, with the advantages, procured by a fault, lying at his disposal, the water from the well of Bethlehem sparkling before him, he become convinced of his fault, aware that he has done wrong, or not acted with the honor and integrity which he was bound to have maintained. Is he to drink of the water, to enjoy the advantages? Ah, it may be often a hard question: but we do not see how there can be any true penitence, where what has been wrongfully obtained is kept and used, as though it had been the produce of equitable dealing. If a man have grown rich by dishonesty, he ought, we believe, to become poor through repentance. We cannot think it enough, if an individual, who has not made his

money in the most clean-handed way, and who feels compunction in consequence, give large sums in charity, as an atonement, or reparation for his fault. If he only give what he can conveniently spare, or even if his charities somewhat press on his resources, he certainly does nothing but what, on high christian principle, he would be bound equally to do, had his property accumulated in the most honorable modes. And it cannot be sufficient to make that use of money unjustly acquired, which a man of strong piety would make of the produce of integrity and industry, and thus, over and above the concealment of having been dishonest, to acquire the reputation of being benevolent.

We should, therefore, be disposed to give the conduct of David as furnishing an example for those, who, conscious of a fault, are so situated as to be able to reap advantage from that fault. Let the case be that at which we have just hinted, as not unlikely to occur amid the complicated interests of a great mercantile community. Let us suppose an opportunity, presented to a trader, of making large profits, if he will but deviate, in some trifling particular, from what is strictly and undoubtedly upright. The fault to be committed may hardly be greater than that committed by David, who did nothing but thoughtlessly give utterance to a wish which ought not to have been entertained, or at least not expressed. It may just depend on the keeping back of some piece of information which the trade is not compelled to divulge, and which others, if equally on the alert, and equally shrewd, might perhaps have equally obtained, whether a certain article shall fetch a certain price, or be suddenly and greatly depreciated. The trader does nothing but hold his tongue, as David did nothing but give it too much license, and a large profit in consequence lies at his disposal. But now a feeling is wrought in the trader's mind, that it was not the act of a conscientious and high principled man, to take advantage of the ignorance of others, and thus entangle them in a bargain which they would not have made, with his reasons for expecting the sudden fall in the market. And as he debates what ought to be done with property so dubiously acquired, his first resolution will probably be to use it

well and religiously: at least, he will say, it increases my power of benefiting others, and promoting religious objects; and I may lawfully retain it, intending that it shall be thus employed. But this is, to the very letter, what David would have done, had he resolved to drink the water, arguing that it would refresh and invigorate him, and thus enable him to fight with greater strength the battle of the Lord. But God will have no offering on which there is a stain. Money, soiled by the mode of acquisition, is hardly to be sanctified by the mode of employment. When Zaccheus stood before Christ, and described what he did with his property, he spake of giving half his goods to the poor; but, mark, he did not reckon amongst those goods what he might have acquired through underhand dealing—such portion, if such there were, was not his to retain or distribute at pleasure: “If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold.” There was an accurate distinction made by this publican, now that he had been brought to a correct state of mind, between restitution and almsgiving: he would give alms of that only which had been honorably obtained; the rest he returned, with large interest, to those from whom it had been unfairly procured.

And though it might be impossible for the trader, in the case just supposed, to make restitution precisely to the parties who have been injured through his successful speculations, we do not see how, with his conscience accusing him of having done wrong, he can lawfully appropriate any share of the profits, any more than David might have lawfully drunk of the water procured at his ill-advised wish. It may not be possible to make restitution: for so interwoven are various interests, and so many are the contrivances for shifting off losses from ourselves, and making them fall upon others, that it is often hard to say where the pressure really rests; and it is among the most melancholy of facts, that the rich speculator who seems only to sweep up the gains of men of large means like himself, would often be found, if you could trace the effects of his speculations through their multifold spreadings, to have compassed unwittingly the ruin of a hundred petty dealers, and wrung away the scanty

pittance of orphans and widows. But if there may not be restitution, because the exact objects injured are not to be ascertained, we do not, nevertheless, understand why there should be appropriation. The king of Israel held the helmet in his hands, and looked upon the water as it sparkled in that war-cup. Was he tempted by the freshness and clearness of the converted draught, now that he felt how wrong he had been in breathing the wish? Oh, no! it looked to him like blood; it came not from the well of Bethlehem, but from the veins of his soldiers: shall he drink, so to speak, of the very life of another? he shrinks from the thought and will do nothing with the water but pour it out to God.

And the trader stands, with the profits of his scarcely honorable speculation glittering before him. Shall he invest them for his own use? shall he take possession of them for himself and his family? Oh, they may have been coined out of the losses, the distresses, the sufferings of numerous households; they may as well seem to him dimmed with tears, as the water seemed to David polluted with blood; and we would have him, if his repentance be sincere, and he desire to prove that sincerity, imitate the monarch in refusing to appropriate the least portion, in pouring out the whole as an offering to the Lord; and in exclaiming, when tempted to profit by the sin for which he professes to be sorry, “Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this.”

Now we have thus endeavored to give a practical character to a narrative of scripture, which it is easy to read without supposing it to convey any personal lessons. Probably some of you, on the announcement of our subject, expected us to treat it as a typical history: for the mention of the well of Bethlehem, and the longing for its water, might immediately suggest that Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judah, and that he offers to each of us, what, in his own words, “shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” But it may be doubtful whether we have, in this instance, sufficient authority for regarding the registered occurrences as symbolical; at all events, we should never spiritualize any narrative of facts, till the facts have been carefully examined as facts, and the lessons extracted which

their record may have been designed to convey.

But whilst we should hesitate to found any doctrinal statement on the narrative before us, considered as typical, we know not why, having strictly confined ourselves to the plainest and most practical view of the passage, we may not now, in conclusion, survey the occurrences with an eye that looks for Christ and the Gospel, in the persons and events of earlier dispensations. There may be truth in the supposition, which some have advanced, that David had only a spiritual meaning in the wish to which he gave utterance. It is possible; and, if so, the whole transaction may have had that significative character which belongs to much of the history of early days, and which turned occurrences into parables, through which God instructed his faithful servants. David, partially informed as to the scheme of redemption, and knowing that he himself was, in many points, set to prefigure the Messiah, must often have longed for fuller disclosures, and striven to give shape and consistency to dim, mysterious images, which passed to and fro in his visions as a prophet. He would associate Bethlehem, his own birth-place, with the birth-place of the Deliverer of whom he was a type; and look naturally on the trees and waters of that village, as obtaining a holy, a symbolical character from the illustrious Being who would arise there in "the fulness of time." It might then have been a wish for greater knowledge of redemption, which was uppermost in the monarch's mind, when he longed for water from the well of Bethlehem. How natural, that, harassed as he was with temporal troubles, he should desire spiritual consolations, and that he should pray for the refreshments which were eventually to gush forth, as he well knew, from Bethlehem.

And may there not have been conveyed to him, through what then took place, intimations in regard of the deliverance of the world? Certainly, it were not difficult to give a parabolic character to the occurrences, and to imagine them ordered with a view to David's instruction. If water is to be fetched from the well of Bethlehem, it must be with the discomfiture of a vast host of foes: three unite in the purpose, and overbear all opponents. And if

"living water" is to be brought to those who lie parched on the moral desert of the earth, indeed it can only be with the defeat of mightier than the Philistines: principality and power withstand the endeavor: who shall prevail in so great an enterprise? Three must combine: it is not a work for any one person, even though divine; but three shall unite, to strike down the adversaries, and bring the draught of life to the perishing: and if the cup come apparently in the hand of but one of the three, the other two shall have been equally instrumental in procuring the blessing.

Thus far there is so much analogy as would seem to make it not improbable, that the transaction was designed to be significative or symbolical. But does the analogy end here? We would not carry it too far; and yet we can believe that a still deeper lesson was opened up to David. Did he long for water from the well of Bethlehem? did he think that it was only water, something merely to refresh the parched lip of the pilgrim, which was to flow from the Surety of a world that iniquity had ruined? It may have been so: it may have been that he was yet but imperfectly taught in the mysterious truths of propitiation and redemption. What then? he receives what he had longed for, what had been drawn from the well of Bethlehem; but it seems to him not water, it seems to him blood, the blood of one of those who had braved so much for his refreshment. May he not have learned something from this as to the nature of the interposition which the Redeemer would make? May he not have gathered that the fountain to be opened, for the cleansing and refreshing of the world, would be a fountain of blood?

"My blood is drink indeed"—these words, uttered years after by the Redeemer himself, may have been virtually syllabled to the Psalmist, through his being forced to regard as blood the water from the well of Bethlehem, that well to which he looked as typifying, in some way, the person or office of Christ. And then there is a high solemnity in his pouring out the water unto the Lord. It was the blood of the costliest sacrifice, and must all be presented as an expiatory offering.

We know not whether David were thus

instructed or not; whether the transaction were designed to be significative, nor whether, if it were, the symbols were explained. But certainly the occurrences are such as might be woven into a kind of parable of redemption; and it is always pleasing to find figures and shadows which correspond to Christian truths, even where we have no express warrant for asserting the resemblance. Blessed be God, we need not long in vain for water from the well of Bethle-

hem. The host of the mighty have been broken through; a stronger than the strong has unlocked for us the flowings of the river of life: but oh, if we would take of the stream, and live for ever, we must acknowledge it as the blood of Him who went on our behalf against "principalities and powers," and who finding the springs of human happiness dried, filled them from his own veins, and they gushed with immortality.

S E R M O N V I I I .

THE THIRST OF CHRIST.

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."—JOHN, XIX. 28.

If an impostor were to arise, desirous of passing himself off as some personage whom prophets had foretold, he would naturally take the recorded predictions, and endeavor to make the facts of his history agree with their announcements. It would evidently be useless for him to pretend to the being the predicted individual, unless he could point out at least an apparent correspondence between what he was, and what he did, and the character and conduct which prophecy had delineated. There would, of course, be an immediate reference to the ancient writings, an immediate comparison of their foretellings with what was now given as their accomplishment; and if the two did not agree, the pretender would be instantly scouted, and no one could for a moment be deceived by his pretensions.

Hence the great endeavor of the supposed impostor would certainly be to extract from prophecy a full account of the actions and fortunes of the individual

for whom he wished to be taken, and then, as nearly as possible, to make those actions and fortunes his own. Suppose, for example, that an impostor had desired to pass himself off as the Messiah, the deliverer and ruler, so long and anxiously expected by the Jews. He would necessarily have been aware that the national expectation rested on certain ancient prophecies, and that all which could be known beforehand of the Christ was contained in certain books received as inspired. It is not, therefore, to be imagined that he would fail to be a student of prophecy, or to take its descriptions as sketches in which he must exhibit delineations of himself. But, supposing him to have done this, could he have made much way in establishing a correspondence between himself and the subject of prophecy? It is easy, undoubtedly, to find, or fancy predictions of which a man might contrive an apparent fulfilment in respect of himself. They might be predictions of certain

things that should be done, and these, or very similar, the man might be able to perform. They might be predictions of certain things that should be suffered; and these, or very similar, the man might endure. But could the individual, whom we have supposed setting up for the Messiah, have managed to effect a conformity between his actions and sufferings, and those predicted of our Lord? It is allowed on all hands, that the history of Christ, as related in the Gospels, corresponds, with great accuracy, to what prophets had foretold of the Messiah. But is the correspondence such as an ingenious impostor, having the prophecies in his hands, and studying to produce their apparent accomplishment, could have possibly effected? This is a question well worth the being asked, though the answer is so easy that you may all give it for yourselves.

There are a few respects in which an impostor might have contrived the fulfilment of prophecy. But most of the predictions referring to Christ are of things over which the individual could have no control: predictions, for example, as to the place and circumstances of his birth, as to the treatment which he should meet with, and the death which he should die. They are predictions which were not to be fulfilled by the actions of the party himself, but by the actions of others; and we need not say how little power the individual could have of making others so act as seemingly to accomplish prophecy, however bent he might be on the apparently fulfilling it himself. And it ought to be further observed, that if an impostor had endeavored, in the time of our Lord, to pass himself off as the predicted Messiah, and, accordingly, had attempted to effect a correspondence between his own history and prophecy, he would never have made himself "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He would have taken the national expectation as the just interpretation of prophecy, and never have thought of making good his pretensions by affecting a resemblance between himself and delineations which those around him either denied or disliked. His pattern would unquestionably have been the Messiah, not as described by seers of old, but rather as described in the popular explanations of their visions: and we need not tell you

that such a Messiah was not presented in the person of our Lord and Master Christ.

Thus there is nothing easier than the showing that the correspondence which may be traced between Jesus of Nazareth, and a mysterious personage of whom ancient prophecy makes frequent mention, is such as could not have been produced by any impostor, however artful or powerful. Even had prophecy been far clearer and more explicit than it was; had it not required, in many particulars which now seem quite plain, the being accomplished in order to the being thoroughly understood; we may fearlessly declare that no pretender, taking it as his guide, and laboring to make his life its illustration, could have succeeded in effecting, even in appearance, the thousandth part of those numerous, striking, and frequently minute fulfilments which are to be traced in the actions and endurances of Him whom we honor as the King of Israel, the Anointed of God.

But why have we gone into these remarks on a point which, perhaps, may never have occurred to any of our hearers? for, probably, none of you ever entertained a suspicion that Christ might have contrived those fulfilments of prophecy on which so much stress is laid. Our reason is easily given. We have in our text the record of a thing done by Christ, with the view, or for the purpose, of accomplishing an ancient prediction. The course pursued is precisely that which, according to our foregoing statements, an impostor might have been expected to take. The party claiming to be the Messiah remembers a certain prophecy which has not yet been fulfilled, and forthwith sets himself to procure its fulfilment. It is, you see, expressly stated that Jesus said, "I thirst," in order that he might bring round the accomplishment of a passage of Scripture. And had this been the solitary instance in which prophecy found itself fulfilled in the history of Jesus, or had other fulfilments been of the same kind, such, that is, as might possibly have been contrived or planned, we admit that the argument from prophecy would have been of little worth in establishing the Messiahship of our Lord. But we have already sufficiently shown you that no such explanation can be given of the correspondences

between history and prophecy in the case of the Redeemer; forasmuch as many of them were such as it was not in the power of any pretender to have produced, and many more would have been avoided, rather than attempted, by the shrewdest deceiver. And this having been determined, we may allow that Christ occasionally acted with the express design of fulfilling predictions which had reference to himself; that he shaped his conduct, and ordered his sayings, with a view to agreement with what prophets had foretold. We may admit this, without any misgivings that we perhaps weaken the argument from prophecy, seeing that, whilst what we admit is of very rare occurrence, it cannot bring suspicion upon evidence derived from the general character of predictions, and their accomplishment.

And it is worth your observing that, even in the case before us, though unquestionably Christ complained of thirst for the purpose of fulfilling a prophecy, it was not in man's power to insure the fulfilment. His mere complaining of the thirst accomplished no prediction. The prediction, as we shall presently see, required that when the Messiah was thirsty there should be given him vinegar to drink. Had our Lord asked for vinegar, and had vinegar been brought him, there might have been some ground for saying that he actually made the accomplishment of a prophecy. But when he only complained of thirst, and when, in answer to his complaint, not merely was a sponge put to his mouth, but a sponge full of vinegar, you may see that there were circumstances, and contingencies, which could hardly have been provided for, except by divine foresight; so that, although indeed Christ made his complaint, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," there is little probability that the Scripture would have been fulfilled had he not been in truth the Son of the living God. You may say that Christ saw "the vessel full of vinegar," and that he might fairly have calculated that a complaint of thirst would be met by the offer of vinegar. But, at least, he could not have arranged that the vinegar should be the nearest drink at hand, even if it were at hand; for "one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar;" and thus, put the case how you will, the accomplishment of the prophe-

cy hardly came within human contrivance. Or you may say, that, as vinegar was commonly used by the Roman soldiers, the almost certainty was that vinegar would be offered: but it appears that only one person was willing to attend to Christ's complaint, "the rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him." How far, then, was the accomplishment from having been necessarily in the power of a deceiver!

We may, however, consider that enough has now been said on an objection which might be raised against a fulfilment of prophecy, because there was an evident acting with a view to that fulfilment. We would pass to more interesting statements, which may be grounded on the very simple, but affecting incident, which is recorded in our text. We hardly know whether, in the whole narrative of the Mediator's sufferings, there is a verse so full of material for profitable meditation. We shall not attempt to parcel out this material under any set divisions, but rather leave ourselves free to follow such trains of thought as may successively present themselves. We shall only assign it, as the general object of the remainder of our discourse, to examine the truths and inferences derivable from the facts, that, just before he expired, Christ exclaimed, "I thirst," and that he uttered the exclamation in order "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

Now we think it well deserving your notice, that it should have been for the sake of accomplishing prophecy, and not that of assuaging his pains, that our Lord, in his last moments, complained of thirst. It seems implied in the concise statement of the Evangelist, that, had he not remembered a prediction which was yet unfulfilled, Christ would have been silent, though he might have used of himself the touching words of the Psalmist, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." Intolerable must have been his thirst as he hung between heaven and earth; yet he would never, as it seems, have mentioned that thirst, nor asked a single drop of moisture, had he not thought it necessary to the complete proof of his mission. You know that this is the solitary exclamation which he uttered expressive of bodily suffering. He is not reported to have

said any thing when the crown of thorns was fastened round his forehead. There is no recorded cry, or groan, when the nails were driven into his hands and feet, or when the cross was set upright, though the pain must have been acute, almost beyond thought. He endured all this, not only without a murmur, but without even a manifestation, or indication, of his agony; so that never was there the martyr who bore with greater fortitude the torments of a lingering and excruciating death.

His other sufferings, however, scarcely admitted of alleviation; there was nothing to be done but submit, and wait patiently for death. Though even in regard of these he seems to have declined the ordinary modes of mitigation, for he refused the "wine mingled with myrrh," which was tendered him just before his crucifixion, and which, by partially stupefying the victim, might have diminished the torture. He had a great work to perform on the cross, and he would not deaden his faculties ere he ascended that terrible altar.

But thirst might have been relieved—
—thirst, which must have been one of the most distressing consequences of crucifixion—and it would have been natural that he should have asked of the bystanders a few drops of water. And he did mention his thirst, but not for the sake of moistening the parched tongue and throat—only to afford occasion for another proof of his being the Messiah. It is as though he had no thought to give to his sufferings, but, even in the moment of terrible extremity, were intent upon nothing but the great work which he had undertaken for men. We may even venture to think that not only was it not for the sake of mitigating his sufferings that he complained of thirst; but that it was an increase of those sufferings to have to make the complaint. The multitude, which stood round, were disposed to treat him with derision; they were watching him, maliciously and scornfully, that they might triumph in his anguish. You may judge how eager they were to show contempt and hatred of the sufferer, from what we have already referred to, as having occurred on his utterance of the piteous cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" The insulting shout immediately arose, "This man calleth for

Elias"—so ready were they to make him the subject of ridicule, and so on the watch for proof that they had succeeded in driving the iron into his soul.

But hitherto he had, as it were, almost baffled and disappointed them: he had betrayed little or no emotion; but, by his apparent superiority to bodily torture, had denied them all occasion for fierce exultation. And it quite consists with what we know of the innocent but sensitive sufferer, that we should suppose it a new trial to him to have to confess what he felt, and thus to expose himself to the revilings of his inveterate enemies. There had been hitherto such a majesty in his anguish, such an awful and dignified defiance of torture, as must almost have made the executioner crouch before the victim. And now must he, as it were, yield? Must he, by an acknowledgment of suffering, gratify a savage crowd, and pierce the few fond and faithful hearts which were to be found at the foot of the cross? His mother was within hearing; at her side was the disciple whom he loved; they were already wounded to the quick—shall he lacerate them yet more by speaking of his wretchedness?

But the Scripture must be fulfilled. There was yet a particular in which prophecy had to be accomplished; and every other feeling gave way to that of the necessity of completing the proof of his being the Messiah. It was the last, and one of the most touching, of the evidences of his love. It was only his love for us which made him speak of his thirst. He would not leave the smallest room for doubt that he was indeed the promised Redeemer: he loved us too well not to provide against every possible suspicion; and therefore, though he would never have complained for the sake of obtaining any assuagement of the pain; though he would have desired to avoid complaining, that he might not provoke fresh insult from the multitude; though he would have kept silence, if only that he might not add to the grief of the few who tenderly loved him; yet, rather than allow the least particle to be wanting in the evidence whereby we might know him as the Christ, he gave all but his last words to an expression of distress.

Oh, we know of nothing which more shows the ardency of the Savior's love

for the church, than this confession of thirst just before he expired. We look on him with admiration, as he stands unmoved before Pilate, and returns no answer to the vehement accusations poured forth by his countrymen. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." We behold him scourged, and buffeted, and crowned with thorns, and nailed to the accursed tree—and we are amazed, yea, confounded, by his patience; for not the least cry is wrung from him in his anguish. Is it that he does not feel acutely? Is it that his humanity is not sensitive to pain? Ah, not so. He is, all the while, tortured by an excruciating thirst, which is at once the evidence and the accompaniment of racking pangs. But he has to set an example of endurance; he is moreover occupied with thoughts and hopes of the world's deliverance; and, therefore, by a mighty effort, he keeps down the struggling sorrow, and restrains every token of agony.

This, then, is in love to us; his silence is in love to us. But it might have accorded best with the feelings of so lofty a Being, thus to baffle his adversaries, by refusing to let them see him writhe beneath their merciless inflictions—does he love us so well that he will even yield to those adversaries, and confess himself vanquished, if it might be for our good? Yea, even this he will do; for remembering, as he hangs upon the cross, a prediction which has yet to be fulfilled, he forgets all in his desire to provide for our conviction, and breaks into the cry, "I thirst," in order only that the Scripture might be accomplished.

But we have stated that the prediction, which our Lord had in mind, was not one of great prominence, not one perhaps whose fulfilment would appear to us of much moment. We may suppose it to have been to words in the sixty-ninth Psalm that Christ mentally referred: "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." There is no other express prophecy whose accomplishment he can be thought to have contemplated; and we may venture to say, that, if this had not been literally fulfilled in respect of our Lord, we should hardly have urged it as an objection

against his pretensions. Accustomed to regard the Psalms as spoken primarily in the person of David, we do not expect, even when they are undoubtedly prophetic, to find every line verified in the history of that Messiah of whom David was the type. We experience no surprise, if, in a Psalm, the quotations from which in the New Testament prove that it speaks of the Christ, we meet with verses which we cannot distinctly show to be applicable to our Lord. Suppose then that Christ had died without complaining of thirst, and without receiving the vinegar—we should perhaps scarcely have said that there was a prediction which had never been accomplished. We should either have supposed that the verse in question belonged in some way to David, or we should have given it, as we easily might, a figurative sense, and then have sought its fulfilment in the indignities and cruelties of which Christ was the subject.

And this shows you what a very minute particular it was in the predictions of himself, which caused our Lord to break silence, and utter an expression of suffering. It was a particular which we should probably have overlooked or of which, at least, we should never have reckoned the literal accomplishment indispensable to the completeness of the prophetic evidence for Christ. Yet, so anxious, so determined was the Redeemer to leave us no possible excuse for rejecting him as the anointed of God, that, not satisfied with having fulfilled all but this inconsiderable particular, and though to fulfil it must cost him, as we have shown you, a very painful effort, he would not breathe out his soul till he had tasted the vinegar. This was indeed a manifestation of his love: but there are other truths, besides that of the Savior's solicitude for our good, to be drawn from his determination that the least prophecy should not go unaccomplished.

You will observe that it is affirmed in the text, that Jesus knew that all things were now accomplished; and that, knowing this, he proceeded to speak of his thirst, with a view to the fulfilment of yet one more prediction. Of course there were many things which had not been accomplished, many whose accomplishment was still necessarily future, having respect to the burial, re-

surrection, ascension, and triumph of Christ. But Jesus knew that every thing was accomplished, which had to be accomplished before his actual death, except the receiving the vinegar. He knew that there remained nothing but that the words, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," should be fulfilled in his person, and he might resign his soul into the hands of the Father, convinced that every prophecy which bore reference to the life or death of the Messiah, had received its completion, and would be a witness for him to all after ages. You must admit that the text represents Jesus as knowing that there was but one word of prophecy which had not yet been accomplished, and that, too, a prophecy of so inconsiderable a particular, that we should scarcely have detected the want, had our Lord died without bringing it to pass.

This is a most surprising testimony to the completion of prophecy: it is a bold challenge to the infidel who would dispute the claims of Him who hung upon the cross. By taking an apparently unimportant prediction, and dealing with it as the only prediction, whether in type or in word, which had not yet been fulfilled, Jesus may be said to have staked his Messiahship on every single prophecy—"Find one, a solitary one, which I have not accomplished, and I resign all pretension to the being God's Son." And when you come to think of the multitude of predictions which have respect to the life and death of the Messiah, and of the almost countless mystical rites which, equally with the visions of seers, shadowed the "One Mediator between God and man," you can hardly fail to be amazed at the assertion, that Jesus knew that "all things were now accomplished." Yet, believing him to have been divine, we know him to have been omniscient; and, therefore, we are emboldened so to state the argument from prophecy, as to be ready to give up all, if you can find a single flaw. The writings of "holy men of old" teem with notices of that Being whom God had promised to send in "the fullness of time." Some of these notices relate to important, others to apparently trivial particulars. The line of which he was to spring, the power by which he should be conceived, the place in which he should be born, the dangers

which should threaten his childhood, the miracles which he should work in his manhood, the treatment which he should receive, the malice of his enemies, the desertion of his friends, the price at which he should be sold, the dividing of his garments, the death which he should die—all these are stated with the precision and minuteness of history; as though prophets had been biographers, and, not content with general outlines, had been instructed to furnish records of daily actions and occurrences. And over and above predictions so comprehensive yet so abounding in detail, there are figurative rites which all had respect to the same illustrious person; a thousand types foreshow his office, a thousand emblems represent his deeds and his sufferings.

And we are not satisfied with saying, that, in every striking and prominent particular, a correspondence may be traced between the Christ whose history we have in the Gospels, and the Christ whom we find in the strains of prophets, and the institutions of the law. We do not ask you to admit that it must have been of Jesus of Nazareth that the Old Testament spake, and that the temple services were full, because there are certain main features of that person in the description of inspired writers, and the shadows of ceremonial observances. Our position is, that there is not a single line of prophecy, which can be shown to refer to the life and death of the Messiah, which was not accomplished in Jesus; not a single type in the law to which he was not an antitype. You are at liberty to take any prediction, you are at liberty to take any shadow; and we are ready to rest the cause of christianity on that prediction's having been fulfilled in Jesus, or on his having been the substance of that shadow. Neither is this the challenge of a rash and boastful theology. This is the criterion which the Founder of our religion himself may be said to have appointed, and that, too, at the very moment when he was finishing our redemption. And we know not how to convey to you our idea of the wonderfulness of the fact, that Christ could feel, after he had hung for hours upon the cross, that, if a few drops of vinegar were given him by a by-stander, every jot and tittle would be accomplished of all that had been foretold of

the Messiah, up to the time of his death, from the first prophecy to Adam to the last words of Malachi. But it is unquestionable, from our text, that such was his feeling; upon this feeling we may safely ground the challenge; rather, we may consider it as the challenge of the Redeemer himself to the unbelieving of every generation.

It seems to us as though the Savior, whilst suspended between earth and heaven, had summoned before him every prophet and seer whom God had raised up in successive ages of the world, and had required each, as he passed in review, to give in his claims on the predicted Messiah. No marvel that he almost forgot his intense sufferings whilst engaged in so sublime and momentous an inquiry, whilst communing with patriarchs and priests, and the long train of heralds who had seen his day afar off, and kept expectation alive amongst men. And Abraham recounts to him all the particulars of the sacrifice of his son: Jacob reminds him of the departure of the sceptre from Judah: Moses speaks of the resemblance which must be borne to himself: Aaron, in his sacerdotal vestments, crowds the scene with mystic figures. Then arise the later prophets. They speak of his virgin mother; of his divine parentage, and yet of his descent from David. Isaiah produces his numerous, and almost historic, delineations: Daniel reckons up his seventy weeks: Micah fixes the nativity to Bethlehem Ephrathah: Zechariah weighs the thirty pieces of silver, and introduces her king to Jerusalem, "riding upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass:" Malachi revives Elias, and sends him as a messenger to "prepare the way of the Lord." And David, as though his harp had been fresh strung, pours forth again his touching melodies, repeating the piteous complaints which mingled at times with notes of triumph, he had been instructed to utter in his typical character.

But one after another of these ancient worthies passes from before the Mediator, leaving him assured that there is not the line in his prophetic scroll which has not been accomplished. And that Mediator is just about to commend his soul into the hands of the Father, satisfied of there being no defect in the evidence from prophecy, when one saying of the

royal Psalmist strikes him as not yet literally verified, and he defers death a moment longer, that this too, though seemingly of little moment, may hold good of himself. Yes, champions of infidelity, disprove it if you can, and if you cannot, explain, if you can, on your own principles, how the almost countless lines of prophecy came to meet in one person, and that one Jesus whom you refuse to adore. Yes, followers of the Savior, search deeply into the fact, and after searching, fail, if you can, to triumph in the having as your leader one who fulfilled to the letter, in the short space of a life, whatsoever voices and visions from on high had assigned, through many centuries, to the seed of the woman. True it is, gloriously, uncontestedly true, that Jesus had only, just before he died, to exclaim, "I thirst," and to receive, in answer to his complaint, a few drops of vinegar on a sponge, and he could then breathe out his spirit, amid the confessions of patriarchs, and prophets, and priests, and kings, each testifying, with a voice of wonder and of worship, that "all things," without a solitary exception, that "all things were now accomplished."

But our text throws light on another doctrine, or fact which, if often presented to your attention, is of so great importance as to deserve the being frequently stated. We are now about to refer to the power which Christ had over his life, a power which caused his death to differ altogether from that of an ordinary man. We wish you to observe the surprising composure which is indicated by the words on which we now discourse. They seem to represent Christ, according to our foregoing statement, as actually examining all the records of prophecy, that he might determine whether there yet remained any thing to be done before the soul could be dismissed from the body. They give us the idea of a being who, in full possession of every faculty, is engaged in investigating ancient documents, rather than of one who, exhausted by protracted sufferings, is on the point of dissolution. How wonderful that the recollection should be so clear! that the almost expiring man should be able, amid the throes of death, to fix on a single, inconsiderable prediction, to decide that there was no other, out of an immense assem-

blage, which had yet to be accomplished, and to take measures for its being accomplished before he breathed his last! What collectedness, what superiority to suffering, yea, what command over death!

For it is evident—and this is the most remarkable thing—that Jesus determined that he would live until the prediction were fulfilled, and that he would die so soon as it were. The Evangelist tells us, “When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” He waited till the vinegar had been given him, till, that is, the only unaccomplished prophecy had been accomplished, and then immediately, as though it were quite optional with him at what moment he would die, “gave up the ghost.” This is amazing; this is unlike death, though it was actually the separation of body and soul; for where is the necessity of nature? where the ebbing away of strength? where the gradual wearing out of the principle of life? Christ evidently died just when he chose to die, and only because he chose to die: he had the spirit in his own keeping, and could retain or dismiss it as he pleased. You find that Pilate and others wondered at finding him so soon dead; he died sooner than a crucified person could have been expected to die; and herein too he had reference to prophecy, for had he lingered the ordinary or natural period, his legs would have been broken, as were those of the malefactors executed with him, whereas there was a typical prediction, in the paschal lamb, that not a bone of him should be broken.

So that, with Christ, to die was strictly a voluntary act—“I lay down my life: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”—it was an act of which he could fix the precise moment, which he could hasten or delay at his own pleasure, which no pain, no disease, no decay could effect, but which was wrought, altogether and at once, by his will. Death was not with him what it will be with one of us. We shall die through necessity, with no power over the soul, whether of retaining or dismissing; exhausted by sickness, or broken up by accident, unable to make the pulse beat one more or one

less than shall be ordained by a Being who is immeasurably beyond our control. But what resemblance is there between this and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross? Though dying what would be ordinarily a lingering death,—dying, to use a common expression, by inches, and therefore certain to be, at the least, exhausted and spent—we find him, in the few moments preceding dissolution, with every power in full play, the mind all in action for the accomplishing his mission, and keeping, as it were, the vital principle under its orders, ready to be suspended so soon as prophecies were fulfilled.

Call ye this death? Yes, men and brethren, this was really death: he who hung upon the cross died as actually as any one of us will die; for death is the separation of the soul from the body; and the soul of Christ went into the separate state, whilst his body was consigned to the grave. But call ye this the death of a mere man? can ye account for the peculiarities of Christ's death, except by supposing him the Lord of life and glory? Martyrs, ye died bravely, and beautifully; but ye died not thus. Saints of God, ye went wondrously through the last struggle; but ye went not thus. Oh, it is a noble thing, that we can go to the scene of crucifixion, and there, in spite of all the ignominy and suffering, discover in the dying man the incarnate God. The Jew and the Greek may taunt us with the shame of the cross; we glory in that cross: at no moment of his course has the Deity shone more brightly through the humanity of the Mediator: not when his voice was heard in the grave, and the buried returned to the living, did he more conspicuously show divine power over death, than in the releasing, when he would, his own soul from the body. Come with us and gaze on this mysterious person dying, “the just for the unjust.” Seems he to you to be dying as an ordinary man? Can ye find no difference between him and those crucified, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left? Nay, in them you have all the evidence that life is being drained out drop by drop, and that they are sinking beneath a process of painful exhaustion. But in him there are no tokens of the being overmastered, enfeebled, or worn down. In that mangled and bleeding

body, there seems, to all appearance, as much animation as though there had not been going on, for hours, an assault on the citadel of life. Let us watch his last moments, let us observe his last act. But those moments are over, whilst we thought them yet distant; he has suddenly expired, though an instant ago there was no sign of death. How is this? how, but that he has indeed proved the truth of his assertion, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself!" an assertion which could be true of no one who had not an actual lordship over life, who was not in fact, his own source of life, who was not in fact the Author of life. He has retained his spirit whilst he chose; he has dismissed that spirit when he would; and thus, though in the form of a creature, he has exercised the prerogative of the Creator.

The cross, then, with all its shame, the act of dissolution, with all its fearfulness, bears as strong attestation to the essential Deity of Christ, as the most amazing miracle performed, or the fullest prophecy accomplished. And we bow before a Being, as more than human, as nothing less than divine, who died by his own act, though nailed to a cross; by an effort of his own will, though beneath the hands of fierce executioners; we hail him, even in the midst of ignominy, as "the image of the invisible God," seeing that he could forbid the departure of the soul whilst there remained a prediction unfulfilled, and command it into paradise the moment that he saw that all things were accomplished.

Now they have not, we think, been either uninteresting or unimportant truths which we have thus derived from the fact that Christ complained of thirst on the cross, on purpose "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." But we have yet to fix your thoughts more particularly on Christ as an example, exhorting you to observe how engrossed he was with the work of redemption, how intent up to the last moment of life, on performing the will of the Father who sent him. You must not think that, because Jesus had such power over his own life as we have just now described—a power which made him inaccessible to death, except so far as he chose to give death permission—he did not suffer acutely as he hung upon the cross. It is true that

crucifixion never could have killed him, and that he did not die of the torture and exhaustion thereby produced; but nevertheless it is, on this very account, true, that his sufferings must have vastly exceeded those of the malefactors crucified with him. So far as the natural effects of crucifixion were concerned, he was not necessarily nearer dying when he died than when first fastened to the tree. But what does this prove, except that, retaining from first to last all his sensibilities, he must, from first to last, have endured the same exquisite torments? whereas, had he been dying, just as the thieves on either side of him were, he would gradually have become faint through loss of blood and excess of pain, and thus have been less and less sensitive to the pangs of dissolution.

Thus, in keeping the vital principle in undiminished vigor up to the moment of the departure of the soul, Christ did but keep undiminished the inconceivable anguish of being nailed to the cross; crucifixion, as it were, was momentarily repeated, and the agony of each instant was the agony of the first. Yet even to this did the Mediator willingly submit: for had he allowed himself the relief of exhaustion, his faculties would have been numbed, and he had full need of these, that he might finish in death what he had been engaged on in life. What an example did he thus set us, that we decline every indulgence which might possibly incapacitate us for doing God's work and submit cheerfully to every inconvenience which may attend its performance! Oh, never were the Redeemer's love, and zeal, and patience so conspicuous as throughout those dark hours when he hung upon the tree. He might have died at once; and we dare not say that even then our redemption would not have been complete. There would have been equally the shedding of precious blood, and equally perhaps the expiatory offering, had he sent his soul into the separate state the instant that his body had been nailed to the cross. But he would tarry in tribulation, that he might survey his vast undertaking, gather up the fragments, anticipate every possible objection, and beneath the material of conviction to all who were not obstinately bent on infidelity.

What hearts must ours be, that we can

look so coldly on the sufferer—suffering “for us men and for our salvation!” His last thoughts, as his earliest had been, were on our deliverance, on our welfare. Even the words which he uttered, “that the Scripture might be fulfilled,” were as expressive of his mental as of his bodily feeling. Indeed he did thirst: “the zeal of thine house hath consumed me:” he was parched with longing for the glory of God and the safety of man. “I thirst:” I thirst to see of the travail of my soul: I thirst for the effects of my anguish, the discomfiture of Satan, the vindication of my Father, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Shall our last end be, in any measure, like this? Would that it might! Would that, when we come to die, we may thirst with the thirst of the Redeemer’s soul! “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” “My soul thirsteth for thee,” is an exclamation of the Psalmist, when declaring the ardency of his longings after God. And our Savior endured thirst, that our thirst might be quenched. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth—“my heart,” saith he, “in the midst of my body, is even like

melting wax”—that we, inhabitants naturally of “a dry and barren land,” might have access to the river of life, which, clear as crystal, pours itself through the paradise of God.

Who does not thirst for these waters? Ah, brethren, there is nothing required but that every one of us should be able, with perfect truth, to declare, “I thirst,” and the Scripture shall be fulfilled in that man’s drawing water out of the wells of salvation. For the invitations of the Bible presuppose nothing but a sense of want, and a wish for relief. “Ho! every one that thirsteth”—there is the summons, there the description. Oh, that we may now thirst with a thirst for pardon, a thirst for reconciliation, a thirst for holiness. Then, when we come to die, we shall thirst for the joys of immortality—for the pleasures which are at God’s right hand: we shall thirst, even as Christ did, that the Scripture may be fulfilled: and the Scripture shall be fulfilled: for, bowing the head and giving up the ghost, we shall be in his presence with whom is “the fountain of life;” and every promise that has cheered us here, shall be turned into performance to delight us for ever.

S E R M O N I X .

THE SECOND DELIVERY OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.—LUKE XI. 1.

There were two occasions on which our blessed Savior delivered that form of prayer which is known by his name. The first was in the sermon on the mount, about the time of Pentecost; the second was in answer to the request

made him in the text, about the Feast of Tabernacles, many months afterwards. You are not to confound the two occasions, as though the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke had but given different accounts of one and the same

delivery. The occasions were wholly dissimilar, separated by a considerable interval of time : on the one, Christ gave the prayer of himself, with nothing to lead to it but his own wish to instruct ; whereas, on the other, he was distinctly asked by one of his disciples, who probably did but speak in the name of the rest.

We cannot suppose that these disciples had forgotten the Lord's Prayer. Whether or not all now present had been present at the Sermon on the Mount, we may justly conclude that they were all well acquainted with the comprehensive form which Christ had delivered for the use of the church. Why, then, did they ask for another form of prayer ? and what are we to learn from Christ's meeting the wish by simply repeating that before given ? These are not mere curious questions ; you will presently see that they involve points of great interest and importance. Without advancing any conjectures, let us look at the Lord's Prayer as given in the Sermon on the Mount, and as here again given in answer to the request of the disciples : the comparison may furnish some clue which will guide us in our search.

Now we have spoken of the prayer delivered on the two occasions, as though it had been altogether the same : this however is not strictly the case ; there are certain variations in the versions which should not be overlooked. Some of these, indeed, are very slight, requiring only to be mentioned, not examined ; such as that, in the one, the word "debts" is used, in the other, "sins ;" St. Luke says, "Give us day by day ;" St. Matthew, "Give us this day, our daily bread." Such differences are evidently but differences in the mode of expression.

There is, however, one remarkable variation. On the second occasion of delivering his prayer, our Lord altogether omitted the doxology with which he had concluded it on the first. He quite left out, that is, the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Now there can be little doubt, that, in constructing his form of prayer, Christ had respect to the religious usages of the Jews. It is said that a serious student of the Gospel, and one at the same time

versed in Jewish antiquities, may trace, at every step, a designed conformity to the rules and practices of devotion which were at that time observed. Without attempting generally to prove this, it will be worth our while to consider what was the Jewish custom as to the conclusion of their prayers, whether public or private.

We find,* that in the solemn services of the Temple, when the priest had concluded a prayer, the people were wont to make this response ; "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever." Public prayer—prayer, that is, in the Temple, finished with a doxology very similar to that which concludes the Lord's Prayer. But this doxology was never used in more private prayer, prayer in a synagogue, or in a house. Observe, then : our Lord gives his prayer on the first occasion with the doxology, on the second, without it : what may we infer from this ? Surely, that he wished his disciples to understand that the prayer was designed both for public use and for private.

In the Sermon on the Mount the prayer had concluded with the doxology ; and the disciples, we may believe, had thence gathered that the prayer was intended to be used in the Temple. But they still wanted a form for private devotion, and on this account preferred the request which is contained in our text. Our Lord answers the request by giving them the same form, but with the omission of the doxology ; thus teaching that his prayer was adapted to the closet as well as to the church. If regard be had to Jewish usages, nothing can seem less objectionable than this explanation of the insertion of the doxology in one place and its omission in another. The prayer was delivered twice, to prove that it was to serve for public use and for private. Christ showed that it was to be a public prayer by giving it with a doxology ; a private, by giving it without ; for a doxology was that which was then used in the Temple, but not in a house.

And this further explains why our Lord did not add "Amen," in concluding his prayer on the second occasion. It was usual amongst the Jews not to

* Lightfoot, Talmudical Exercitations upon St. Matthew.

add the Amen to prayers which were only petitionary, but to reserve it for expressions of thanksgiving and benediction; whereas, the doxology being omitted, the Lord's prayer, you observe, became purely petitionary. There is evidence of this in the Book of Psalms: the book is full of prayers, but the prayers do not end with Amen. If the psalmist use the Amen, it is after such an exclamation as this: "Blessed be the Lord for evermore." You may trace just the same custom in the writings of the Apostles. Thus St. Paul asks the speaker with tongues, "How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen, at the giving of thanks?" and it is generally after some ascription of praise, or expression of benediction, that he adds an Amen: "The Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen:" "Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen."

Now it is a fact of very great interest, which thus appears fairly established—namely, that the second delivery of the Lord's prayer, as compared with the first, goes to the proving that the petitions in this prayer are equally adapted to private and to public devotion; that we cannot find a more suitable or comprehensive form, whether for the gathering of "the great congregation," for domestic worship, or for the retirement of our closet. Our Lord did not indeed mean to tie us down to the use of this prayer, as though we were never to use any other, or never to expand into larger supplication. But he may certainly be thought to have given this prayer as a perpetual, universal model; and to have asserted its containing an expression for every want and every desire which may lawfully be made the subject of petition unto God. There ought to be no debate as to the suitability of this prayer for all places and seasons, after you have remarked the peculiarities of its double delivery. Do you doubt whether it be a form well adapted to the public assembly? then observe that its petitions were first uttered by our Lord, with such a doxology appended as was never then used but at the solemn gatherings in the temple of God. When you have hereby convinced yourselves of its suitability for public worship, will you hesitate as to its fitness for more private occasions?

for the devotional meetings of the family, or for your own secret communion with God? Then you resemble the disciples, who, having heard the Sermon on the Mount, yet imagined a need for a different form of prayer in their religious retirements. But surely it should teach you, that, at one time as well as at another, the Lord's prayer should find its way from the heart to the lip, to know that our blessed Savior—omitting only the doxology, and thus consecrating to the use of the closet what he had before consecrated to the use of the church—gave precisely the same form, in answer to the request of these disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

But hitherto we have made no way in commenting on the text, except that we may have explained the request of the disciples—a request which has, at first, a strange look, as though Christ had not already delivered a form of prayer, or as though what he had delivered were already forgotten. We remove this strange look, by observing our Lord's answer, and inferring from it that what the disciples now solicited was a form of private prayer: what they had previously received passed with them as designed for public occasions; and the second delivery of the same form, but with certain alterations, both shows us the want of the disciples, and teaches us how such want might best be supplied.

We will now, however, endeavor to bring before you certain other and very interesting truths, which are involved, more or less prominently, in the statements of the text. And, first, as to the employment of Christ when the disciples approach and prefer their request. There is nothing to show distinctly whether our blessed Redeemer had been engaged in private prayer, or had been praying with his followers. But we learn, from many statements of the Evangelists, that he was in the habit of retiring for purposes of private devotion: "He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed;" he "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer;" he was "alone praying." And perhaps it agrees best with the expressions in our text, that we should suppose our Lord to have been engaged in solitary prayer: "As he was praying in a certain place." The disciples had probably been absent from him, as when

they left him sitting on Jacob's well, whilst they went into the city to buy meat. On their return they behold him at prayer: they draw reverently back; they would not intrude on him at so sacred a moment. But the thought occurs to them—"Oh, what a time for obtaining a new lesson in prayer; let us seize on it—let us ask him to instruct us whilst, like Moses coming down from the mount, his face yet shines with celestial communications." They watch the opportunity—you see how it is stated: "When he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him." They appear to have stood at a distance, that they might not interrupt the solemn exercise; but, so soon as they saw the exercise concluded, they pressed eagerly forward to share in its benefit.

But whether or not this were then the relative position of Christ and his disciples—whether he was alone praying, or whether they were praying with him—we know, as we have already said, that our Lord was wont to engage in solitary prayer; and there is no attitude, in which this Divine person is presented to us, wherein he is more wonderful, more deserving to be considered with all that is deepest, and most reverent, in attention. You expect to find Christ working miracles—for you know him to be God in human form; and you feel that he must give such credentials of his mission as shall suffice, if not to remove all unbelief, yet to leave it inexcusable. You even expect to find him enduring anguish—for you know him to have assumed human nature, that he might be capable of suffering; and you thoroughly assent to the fundamental truth, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." But you could hardly have expected to have found him spending whole nights in prayer. What has that pure, that spotless Being, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," to do with importunate supplication, as though he were in danger of offending his heavenly Father, or had to wring from a reluctant hand supplies of that grace, of which himself is, after all, the everlasting fountain?

There is a mysteriousness about Christ praying, which should almost warn us back, as it seems to have warned the disciples. For we are not to suppose that our Redeemer's prayers were all similar to that which is recorded in the seven-

teenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and in which there is the calmness of an Intercessor who knows that he shall prevail, or who feels that he but asks what himself has right to bestow. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of him in language which obliges us to regard him as having wrestled in prayer, wrestled even as one of us may wrestle, with much strain and anguish of mind. The Apostle there says of Christ: "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." There may be here a special reference to our Lord's agony in the garden, when, as you remember, he besought earnestly of the Father, that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from him. But we have no right to confine the Apostle's statement to this particular scene: we may rather conclude, that, when our blessed Savior spent whole nights in prayer, his supplications were mingled with tears, and that it was with the deep emotions of one, who had blessings to procure through importunity, that he addressed himself to his Father in heaven.

You may wonder at this—you may ask how this could be; and we can only answer, that, though the Redeemer was both God and man—two natures having been indissolubly joined in his one Divine person—yet, as man, he seems to have had the same battles to fight, the same assistance to depend upon, as though he had not also been God, but, like one of ourselves, had had the devil for his enemy, and only the Holy Ghost for his comforter. There is frequently a mistake upon this, and one which practically takes away from Christ's example all its power and persuasiveness. Why was Christ able to resist the devil? Why was Christ able to keep himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?" Because, many are ready to reply, he was God as well as man. But surely this must be an erroneous reply. It supposes that when he was exposed to temptation, the Divine nature in his person came to the assistance of the human, upheld it, and made it triumphant. And how then could Christ be an example to us, who, being merely men, can not fly from one nature in ourselves to another, from the weaker to the stronger,

when attacked by certain enemies, or exposed to certain dangers?

The scriptural representation is just the opposite to this. It sets before us Christ as having been as truly a man, as truly left as a man to a man's duties, a man's trials, a man's helps, as though, at the same time, all the fulness of God-head had not dwelt in him bodily. It was not to the divine nature in his own person that he could have recourse when hard pressed by temptation: he had to lean, like one of ourselves, on the aids of the Holy Spirit, aids sought by prayer, and appropriated by faith. The divine nature in his person appears to have had nothing to do with holding up the human, but only with the conferring infinite worth on its sufferings and actions: it did not give the patience to endure, though it gave the preciousness to the endurance; it did not give the strength to obey, but the untold merit to the obedience.

And, upon this representation, we can somewhat enter, though still but remotely, into the prayers of our blessed Redeemer. He was a man, with a man's infirmities, though not with a man's sinful propensities; living, as a man, the life of faith; fighting, as a man, the battle with principalities and powers; and he had before him a task of immeasurable intenseness, which he could not contemplate, as a man, without a sense of awfulness, we had almost said of dread. In this his state of fearful warfare and tremendous undertaking, he had to have recourse to those assistances which are promised to ourselves, which we have to seek for by prayer, and which even he, notwithstanding his oneness with the other persons in the Trinity, had to procure, to preserve, and to employ, through the same processes as the meanest of his disciples. Hence, it may be, his midnight watchings; hence his "strong crying and tears;" hence his prolonged and reiterated supplications.

And however mysterious, or actually incomprehensible, it may be, that a Being, as truly God as he was man, should, as man, have been as much thrown on a man's resources as though he had not also been God, yet what a comfort is it that Christ was thus identified with ourselves, that he went through our trials, met our dangers, and experienced our difficulties! We would have

had but little confidence in committing our prayers to a high priest who had never had to pray himself. But oh, how it should encourage us to wrestle in prayer, to be fervent and importunate in prayer, that it is just what our blessed Lord did before us; and that having, as our Mediator, known continually the agony of supplication, he must, as our Advocate, be all the more disposed, in the language of the Psalmist, to put our tears into his bottle, and to gain audience for our cries. It might strike me with greater amazement to see Christ raise the dead. It might fill me with deeper awe, to behold Christ upon the cross. But it ministers most to my comfort, to look at Christ upon his knees. Then I most know him as my brother in all but my sinfulness, myself in all but the corruption which would have disabled him for being my deliverer.

Oh, let it be with us as with the disciples; let us gaze on the Redeemer as he is "praying in a certain place;" and we shall be more than ever encouraged to the asking from him whatsoever we can need. Then we have him in the attitude which should give confidence, let our want be what it may; especially if it be a freer breathing of the soul—and this breathing is prayer—which we desire to obtain. Christ will sometimes seem so great, so far removed from ourselves, that the timid want courage to address him. Even suffering hardly appears to bring him down to our level; if he weep, it is over our sins that his tears fall, and not over his own; if he is stricken, it is that by his stripes we may be healed; if he die, it is that we may live. But when he prays, he prays for himself. Not but that he also prays for others, and even we, too, are required to do this. But he prays for himself, though he does not suffer for himself. He has wants of his own for which he asks a supply, dangers against which he seeks protection, difficulties in which he entreats guidance. Oh, who will now be afraid of going to him to be taught? Who will not feel, as he sees Jesus "praying in a certain place," that now is the precious moment for casting ourselves before him, and exclaiming with the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Now it is a very important use which has thus been made of the text, in that

the approach of the disciples to the Savior, at the moment of his rising from prayer, serves to admonish us as to Christ's power of sympathy, "in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted;" and to encourage us to go to him in the full assurance of his being as well able to understand, as to satisfy, our wants. But there is still a very beautiful account to which to turn the fact, that it was immediately on his rising from his knees, that our Lord, delivered, for the second time, his form of prayer to his disciples. There was, as we have already hinted, an evident appropriateness in the request of the disciples, if you consider it relatively to the employment in which Christ had just been engaged. It was not a request to be taught how to preach—that might have been the more suitable had Christ just delivered his Sermon on the Mount. It was not a request to be enabled to work miracles—that might have more naturally followed, had Christ just been healing the sick or casting out devils. But it was a request for instruction in prayer, coming immediately on Christ's having been praying, as though the disciples felt that he must then have known most of the difficulties of prayer, and also of its privileges; and that, his soul having been engaged in high communion with God, his tongue might be expected to clothe itself with the richest expressions of desire and the most potent words of entreaty.

And you will all feel how natural, or rather, how just, was this thought of the disciples, that the best moment for a lesson from Christ in prayer, was when Christ himself had just finished praying. It is precisely the thought which we ourselves should entertain, and on which we should be ready to act, in regard of any eminent saint from whom we might wish instruction and assistance. If, feeling my want of some other form of prayer than that which I possess, I determined to apply to a christian distinguished by his piety, and to ask him to compose for me a form, at what moment, if I might choose, would I prefer my request? At the moment of his rising from his knees. When, I should say to myself, is his mind so likely to be in a devotional attitude, when may I so justly expect the frame and the feeling adapted to the dictating pregnant and prevailing petitions, as when he is fresh from the

footstool of God, and has not yet lost the unction which may be believed to have been on him, as he communed with Heaven?

But were I to address myself to him at this moment with my request, and were he, in reply, simply, but solemnly, to repeat to me the Lord's Prayer, what should I conclude? Certainly that, in his judgment, and when moreover that judgment was best circumstanced for deciding, no prayer could be composed so admirably adapted to the expression of my wants as this; and that, having this, I required no other. It is a separate question whether his decision would be right; we now only urge, that in no conceivable method, could he deliver a stronger testimony to the excellence of the Lord's Prayer.

But this is exactly the kind of testimony which is furnished by the circumstances related in our text. Christ, on rising from his knees, is asked by his disciples for a form of prayer adapted to seasons of private devotion. He does nothing but repeat the prayer which he had delivered in his Sermon on the Mount. What an evidence that no better could be furnished! Fresh as he was from direct intercourse with his Father in heaven, the spirit warmed, if we may so speak, through devotional exercise, he could furnish no fuller, no more comprehensive expression of the wants and desires, which, as creatures, we may spread before our Creator, than the few and brief petitions which he had combined on a previous occasion.

There is nothing which gives me so exalted an idea of the worth and excellence of the Lord's Prayer as this. In many ways, indeed, may this worth and excellence be demonstrated; every new demonstration not only establishing the points in debate, but suggesting material for additional proof. And we owe much to commentaries on the Lord's Prayer by learned and pious men, who, expanding its several petitions, have shown that there is nothing which we can lawfully desire, whether for this world or for the next, whether as inhabitants of earth or as candidates for heaven, which is not virtually contained in these few sentences. Other forms of prayer, so far as they are scriptural and sound, are but the Lord's Prayer, beaten out, its syllables

spread, as they may be, into volumes. Indeed, there is no slight analogy between this prayer and the law. The law was given twice, even as this prayer was given twice. The law, meaning thereby the Ten Commandments, is a summary of all things to be done; and this prayer, of all things to be desired. The law divides itself into duties which have respect to God and duties which have respect to man; and similarly, the prayer contains petitions for God's honor, and then petitions for others and ourselves. And as the few precepts of the moral law, when expounded by our blessed Redeemer, grew—like the few loaves which, beneath his creative touch, became the food of thousands—till there was a command for every action, yea, a rule for each word and each thought; so has the prayer only to be drawn out by a spiritual apprehension, and there is a breathing for every want, an expression for every desire, an ejaculation for every emergence.

But whilst all this may be satisfactorily shown through lengthened and patient inquiry, and whilst we may hereby reach conviction of such a fulness and such a comprehensiveness in the Lord's prayer, that we ask every thing which we ought to ask in offering its petitions, the short, but equally sure, mode of establishing the fact, is to observe how this prayer was the second time delivered. I am never so impressed with the beauty, the depth, the largeness, yea, the inexhaustibleness of this form, as when I hear it uttered by Christ, in reply to the request of his disciples. If I ever feel wearied by repetitions of this prayer, or tempted to think that some variation from it would be an improvement, I can look at the circumstances of its second delivery, and want no other commentary to convict me of error. It is not the first delivery which is so replete and reproachful in evidence. I receive indeed the prayer with all docility, and all reverence, as it falls from the Savior's lips in his Sermon on the Mount. But he then delivered it as a form for public prayer, suited to numbers who might not have made much progress in religion; had he been afterwards asked, he might have furnished a yet intenser and more spiritual model, for such as were of higher growth in piety. Besides, our Lord was then preaching; and the tempera-

ment, if we may use the expression, of the preacher, is not likely to be that which is most adapted to prayer. Without confounding the Redeemer with one of ourselves, we may, in a measure, justly reason from ourselves, when considering what occupation is most congenial with devotional feeling. And, certainly, the attitude of an instructor does not commend itself as best suited to the spirit of a suppliant. If I wanted tuition from a preacher in prayer, I should not wish it from him whilst he was preaching, not even though prayer might be the subject of his sermon. I would go to him in his closet rather than in his pulpit; that in the more subdued tone of mind, in the calmer, the more chastened and abased sentiments which may be expected in a man prostrate before God, as compared with the same man haranguing his fellow-men, I might have better ground of hope for those contrite expressions, those burdened cadences, those glowing aspirations, which befit the supplications of one fallen but redeemed. And it is in no sense derogatory to the blessed Redeemer, to say, that if I had only his sermon-delivery of his prayer, it would not, of itself, have convinced me that even he could not have given a more admirable form. I might have felt, and without violation to the awe and reverence due to such a being, that the moment when I should have best liked to hear him express himself in prayer, was not the moment of his upbraiding the hypocrites who stood "in the corners of the streets," or the heathen who were noted for their "vain repetitions."

But the prayer is given a second time, after considerable interval, given that it may serve for private devotion; given by Christ, not when addressing a multitude, but when just risen from his knees. Oh, I want nothing further to tell me, that the Lord's prayer is fuller than human need can exhaust, humbler than human worthlessness can sink, higher than human piety can soar. I ask no learned commentary, no labored exposition; I have Christ's own testimony, given exactly when that testimony has the greatest possible power, that nothing can be added to the prayer, nothing excogitated of loftier, intenser, more disinterested, and yet more self-seeking supplication, when I find that it was when he had

been "praying in a certain place," and as "he ceased" from his prayer, that he re-delivered the same form to his disciples, and in answer to their entreaty, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Now you will all feel for yourselves that the practical point involved in this express and striking testimony of Christ to the fulness of his prayer, and its appropriateness to all persons, places, and seasons, is, that there must be something wrong in the man who finds the Lord's prayer insufficient or unsuitable. We are far from meaning that no other form of prayer should be used: the mind will often wish, will often need, to dwell on some one particular desire; and though, beyond question, that desire has expression in the Lord's prayer, it is there so condensed that he who would be importunate at the mercy-seat may be aided by a more expanded statement.

But, at all events, enough has been adduced to prove that the Lord's prayer should enter largely both into public and private devotion, and that, though it ought not to supersede every other, yet ought no other to be a substitute for it. And if we had but a minute to spend in prayer, what but the Lord's prayer should occupy that minute? better that we gather into that minute all that can be asked for time and for eternity, than that we give it to any less pregnant expression of the wants and desires of a christian. But examine yourselves in this matter; compare your own sense of the sufficiency of the Lord's prayer with the remarkable attestation to that sufficiency which we have found given by our Savior himself: and if the prayer still seem to you inadequate; if, in short, you feel as though you could not pray sufficiently, if, on any account, you were actually limited to the use of this prayer, then let the comparison set you on the searching deeply into the state of your hearts. For, surely, he has reason to fear that his desires should be checked rather than cherished, his wants denied rather than declared, who can find no expression for them in petitions which were not only dictated by Christ, but affirmed by him to comprehend whatsoever we might ask.

But, commending this to your serious meditation, we would, in conclusion, dwell for a moment on the reference

made by the disciples to the instruction in prayer which had been furnished by the Baptist. They ask, you observe, of Christ, that he would teach them to pray "as John also taught his disciples." We have no means of ascertaining what form of prayer had been given by the Baptist. But it should be observed that the Jews' daily and common prayers, their ordinary and occasional, consisted chiefly of benedictions and doxologies; they had, indeed, their petitionary or supplicatory prayers; but these were few in number, and less copious. Now it seems reasonable to suppose that the Baptist taught a form of prayer differing from what the Jewish forms were; he had to inculcate other doctrines than those to which the people were used; and it can hardly, therefore, be doubted that he instructed them to pray in a manner more accordant with the new dispensation which he was commissioned to announce as "at hand." If, standing as he did between the Law and the Gospel, John did not fully unfold the peculiar truths which Christ was afterwards to announce, he nevertheless spake of things, the attaining which supposed that petitions were presented unto God—how then can we question that he taught his followers to pray for these things?

Hence, the probability, at least, is, that in opposition to the custom of the Jews, whose prayers were mostly benedictory, John gave his disciples prayers which were chiefly petitionary; and that when our Lord was asked for instruction in prayer, similar to what had been afforded by the Baptist, the thing sought was some form of supplication, strictly and properly so called. And this agrees excellently with the answer of our Lord; for by omitting the doxology with which he had concluded his prayer on the first delivery, he gave a form of devotion which was purely petitionary.

But the disciples of Christ may not have referred to the particular character of the form of prayer given by John, but only to the fact, that the Baptist had furnished his followers with some form or another. And then there is something very interesting in their request, as grounding itself on what had been done by a teacher of far less authority and wisdom than their own. It was as much

as to say, even "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" gave lessons in prayer; and shall not the voice of Him of whom that stern voice was the har-binger, instruct us how to approach the Lord of the whole earth? The disciples of the forerunner had the privilege of hearing from him what petitions should be offered—shall not the disciples of the Messiah enjoy a similar privilege, though greater in proportion as he is greater than his messenger?

There is then an argument, so to speak, from the instruction afforded by the inferior teacher, to that which may be expected, or hoped for, from the superior. And it is an argument of which we may legitimately make use, whether as pledging God to give, or emboldening us to ask. We may rightly reason that, if the disciples of the lower master have been favored with a lesson, the disciples of the higher will not be left uninstructed. We may rightly reason, yea, we may present ourselves before our Savior with the reasoning on our lips, that if, not only the disciples of the Baptist, but the disciples also of natural religion, have been taught to pray, the disciples of the Christ

shall be yet more deeply and powerfully schooled.

We have sat, as it were, at the feet of nature; and in her every work and her every gesture, in her silences and in her utterances, she has bidden us wait upon God, and seek at his hands the supply of our wants. There is nothing on which creation is more eloquent, nothing more syllabled by the animate and the inanimate, by the music of its mighty movements, the rush of its forces, the lowing of its herds, than that all things hang on the universal Parent, and that his ear is open to the universal petition. And if even nature do thus instruct us to pray, what may we not expect from the Lord our Redeemer? We will approach him, encouraged by the tuition of a prophet, which is, at best, but his messenger or herald. We will say to him, Even the stars, the forests, and the mountains, the works of thine Almighty hands, bid us bow the knee, and supplicate the invisible God. But we need a higher, a more spiritual, lesson. Lord, do Thou teach us to pray, seeing that even nature hath taught her disciples.

S E R M O N X .

PECULIARITIES IN THE MIRACLE IN THE COASTS OF DECAPOLIS.

* And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.—MARK VII. 33, 34.

We do not bring the succeeding verse into our text. You know that the words which we have read to you relate to the Lord our Redeemer; and you need not be told, that, with him, to attempt was to accomplish a miracle. The subject of the present miracle was "one that was deaf and had an impediment in

his speech;" and the result of our Lord's command, "Ephphatha," was, that "straightway his ears were opened, and the strings of his tongue loosed, and he spake plain."

The miracles of our Lord were as diversified as are human wants and infirmities: what sorrow was there for the

soothing of which, what sickness for the healing of which, he did not employ his supernatural powers? But the miracles were diversified, not only as to the things done, but as to the manner also in which they were done: sometimes, indeed for the most part, our Lord only spake the word or laid his hand on the suffering; at other times, virtue went out from him, when touched by the afflicted; and in some few instances, amongst which is that recorded in the text, he employed outward signs, though not such as could have possessed any natural efficacy.

We doubt not that many useful lessons might be drawn from the different modes wherein Christ thus displayed his miraculous power. Considering miracles as parables, figurative exhibitions of the doctrines, as well as forcible evidences of the divine origin, of christianity, we may believe that they are not void of instruction in the minutest of their circumstances, but furnish in every particular, something on which the christian may meditate with advantage. Neither is this true only when you assign a parabolic character to the miracles of our Lord: setting aside the parabolic character, and observing merely how difference in mode was adapted to difference in circumstances, you will often find occasion to admire a display of wisdom and benevolence, to confess the narrative profitable, not only as adding another testimony to the divine power of Christ, but as showing how he sought to make that power subserve his great design of bringing sinners to faith in himself.

We shall find this exemplified as we proceed with the examination of the narrative which we have taken as our subject of discourse. Our foregoing observations will have prepared you for our not insisting on the display of divine power, but engaging you with the peculiarities which attended the display—peculiarities from which we shall endeavor to extract evidences of Christ's goodness, and lessons for ourselves. With this purpose in view, let us go straightway to the scene presented by the Evangelist: let us follow the Redeemer as he takes the deaf man aside from the multitude, and let us observe, with the attentiveness due to the actions of One who did "all things well," the course which he adopts in unstopping his ears and loosening his tongue.

Now you must all be aware, that, in order to constitute a miracle, properly so called, there must be the absence of all instrumentality which is naturally adapted to produce the result. Sickness may be removed by the application of remedies; but he who applies them is never regarded as working a miracle; he may, indeed, excite surprise by using means which shall be rapidly effectual in a case which had been thought desperate, but, whatever the tribute paid to his science and skill, the whole virtue is assumed to lie in the remedies employed; and no one imagines, when looking on the recovered individual, that there has been any thing approaching to the exercise of supernatural power. But if the applied remedies were such as had evidently no tendency to the effecting a cure, you would begin to suspect something of miraculous agency; and yet further, if no remedies whatsoever were used, if the sickness departed at the mere bidding of the physician, you would be almost sure that God had distinctly and unusually interfered—interfered so as to suspend the known laws which ordinarily determine his workings. So long, perhaps, as any remedy appeared to be applied, you would be scrupulous as to admitting a miracle; the remedy might, indeed, seem quite unsuited to the end for which it was employed, not possessing any known virtue for removing the disease; but still it might possess properties not before ascertained; and it is easier, and perhaps juster, to conclude the sickness overcome through some unsuspected energy in the visible means, than through some invisible power altogether unconnected with those means.

Hence it is a necessary criterion in the determining a miracle, that it be altogether independent on second causes, and therefore be performed without any natural instrument. And this is a criterion to which the miracles of our Lord may safely be brought: it was only on one or two occasions that any thing external was employed, and even on these it could not be suspected that means were applied in which any virtue dwelt. The most remarkable of such occasions was that of the healing of the man who had been born blind: our Lord "spat upon the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto

him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Here there was a great deal of preparation: and had not the case been that of blindness from the birth, which was accounted incurable through any natural means, it might have been suspected that Christ had applied some powerful ointment, which, left for a time on the defective organ, and then washed off, would effect, as he had discovered, a radical cure. Even in this case, however, it never seems to have occurred to the Jews, that the thing which had been wrought might not have been actually supernatural: the whole process was accurately reported to the Pharisees; but, though they were most eager to disprove or depreciate the cure, they never thought of ascribing any virtue to the clay; it was manifestly so void of all natural efficacy for the restoration of sight, that they treated the cure as wrought by a word, without even the apparent employment of any second cause.

Nevertheless, we may safely admit, that, had our Lord always acted in this manner, had he never performed a miracle without using some outward instrumentality, there might have been room for suspecting that a connection existed between the instrumentality and the result, and that, therefore, it was not necessarily beyond a doubt, that miracle had been actually wrought. There can, however, be no place for such a suspicion, inasmuch as the occasions were very rare on which our Lord did more than speak that word which was always "with power." But we are bound to consider whether, in the few cases where external application was employed, there was not some reason for the seeming departure from a rule which may be said to have been prescribed by the very nature of miracle. If we find this reason in any one case, it may, probably, be extended to all; and we shall therefore confine ourselves to the instance presented by our subject of discourse.

Here, as in the case of the blind man, there was an external appliance, though not equally calculated to suggest doubt as to the actualness of the miracle. Our Lord put his fingers into the man's ears, and then spat and touched his tongue. It could hardly be imagined, by the most suspicious or incredulous of beings, that there was any natural connection be-

tween what our Lord thus did, and the effect which was produced; and that, consequently, Christ was nothing but a skilful physician, acquainted with remedies which had not yet been discovered by others of his race. If there were any virtue in the action used by Christ, it was manifestly a virtue derived altogether from his superhuman character: allowing that there was power in his touch, it could only have been from the same reason that there was power in his word: the finger was "the finger of God," even as the voice was that which had spoken all things into being.

Yet it could not have been without any meaning, though it may have been without any efficaciousness to the healing of disease, that Christ employed these outward signs: some purpose must have been subserved, forasmuch as we may be sure that there was never any thing useless or superfluous in the actions of our Lord. And the reason why Christ thus touched the defective organs, before uttering the word which was to speak them into health, may be found, as is generally allowed, in the circumstances of the man on whom the miracle was about to be wrought. This man, you will observe, does not seem to have come to Christ of his own accord: it is expressly stated, "And they bring unto him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they beseech him to put his hand upon him." The whole was done by the relatives or friends of the afflicted individual: for any thing that appears to the contrary, he himself may have had no knowledge of Jesus; and, indeed, since his condition disqualified him for holding any conversation, it is likely that he was in a great degree ignorant of the Prophet that had arisen in the land.

But this very fact rendered it important that means should be taken to acquaint him thoroughly with the person, that effected his cure, not only in order to his own satisfaction, but to qualify him to bear witness in favor of Christ. And it is easily seen that what our Lord did was exactly adapted to such a purpose as this. He took him aside from the multitude, because his attention was likely to be distracted by the crowd, and Christ wished to fix it on himself as the author of his cure. Had he healed him immediately, and in the midst of the

through, the man might have had no distinct impression as to who had been his benefactor. Therefore was he separated from the throng; and therefore, yet further, when separated, was he addressed by Christ through those senses which remained unimpaired: through sight and through touch. Christ could not speak to him, as was his ordinary wont, and demand from him a confession of faith in his power to heal: the man was deaf, so that no question could be put to him, and he had an impediment in his speech which would have prevented his replying. But he could see, and could feel what Christ did; and therefore our Lord supplied the place of speech, by touching the tongue and putting his fingers into the ears—for this was virtually saying that he was about to act on those organs—and, by looking up to heaven, for this was informing the deaf man that the healing power must come from above.

The whole action would seem to have been symbolical, and accurately suited to the circumstances of the case. Translate the action into words, and what have we but such sayings as these? "I have taken thee aside from the multitude, that thou mightest observe and remember who it is to whom thou hast been brought. Thine organs are imperfect: here are members of thy body, which are useless to the ends for which they were given, and I am about to act on them with a power which shall supply all defects. Yet I would have thee know that this power is but a credential of my having come forth from God, and should produce in thee belief of my prophetic character. Behold, therefore: I lift my eyes unto heaven, whilst I utter the word which shall give thee hearing and speech."

Such, we say, was virtually the address of our Lord to the man on whom he was about to operate with supernatural power; not an address in language, which was precluded by the peculiarities of the case, but in significative, symbolical action, which is often to the full as expressive as words. And, therefore, it was not without a great design and an important meaning that our Lord departed from his ordinary rule, and ran, as it might have seemed, the risk of bringing the miracle into question, by the privacy in which he wrought it and

the external agency of which he made use. How easily might it have been said that he took the man aside from the multitude, because what he was about to do would not bear being inspected, but involved some deception which could succeed only in a corner. And if suspicion had been excited by his thus requiring a retired place for the performance of the cure, how might that suspicion have been confirmed, when the man came to tell in what way he had been healed? "See," the people might have said, "there was no miracle at all; he applied certain remedies, and he would not suffer us to be near, lest we should discover his secret."

But Christ could venture to brave all this risk: his miraculous power was too well established to be treated as a trick. Some there were who blasphemously ascribed it to Satan; but none, as it would seem, had the hardihood to deny its existence. Yet even the appearance of place for suspicion would not have been given, without sufficient cause, by one who was anxious to leave no possible excuse for the doubting whether or not he were the promised Messiah. And the sufficient cause is found in the circumstances of the case. It did not content the Redeemer to heal bodily infirmities; he sought to reach the inward man through what he did for the outward. If he gave the power of hearing and of speaking, he longed that the unstopped ear might hearken to the Gospel, and the loosened tongue be employed on the high praises of God. But, in order to such ends, it was indispensable that the man should know Jesus as his benefactor, and be persuaded that the power, exerted on his behalf, was wholly from above. But how shall he be instructed in such particulars? He is shut up in that desolation and loneliness, which a closed ear and a fastened tongue necessarily produce, and is not accessible through the avenues by which information is commonly conveyed. I will speak to him, the Redeemer seems to say, through the senses which have been spared to him: sight and touch shall be instrumental to the carrying of truth into his yet darkened soul. O blessed Savior, how great was thy condescension, how unwearied thine endeavor to do good to sinners! As when thou wouldest teach thy disciples humility, thou didst set a

little child in the midst of them; and when thou wouldest warn them of the peril of unfruitfulness, thou didst cause the blighted fig-tree to stand in their path—so now didst thou graciously instruct by significant action; and I see nothing but the merciful, the compassionate, the patient Redeemer, bent on doing good, on instructing and blessing the unworthiest, when I see our Lord taking the deaf man aside from the multitude, and putting his fingers into his ears, and touching his tongue, and looking up to heaven.

But we have probably said enough in explanation of our Lord's having apparently made use of external instrumentality in effecting the miracle which is under review. We now wish to lead you to a wholly different topic: we would have it observed whether the possession of miraculous power did not operate upon Christ in a manner unlike that in which it would, most probably, operate on ourselves. We will not examine whether, if any one of us were gifted with the ability of doing marvellous things, he would not be likely to covet occasions of display, to delight in opportunities of manifesting the energy, when it would excite most amazement, and be hailed with the plaudits of a thousand spectators. Certainly, it were hardly to exaggerate that corruption which adheres to the best of the children of men, to say that the temptation would be found very strong of exerting miraculous power in an ostentatious mode, employing it to purposes which might astonish by their strangeness, and before multitudes whose applauses might be thereby secured. And, just as certainly, their can be nothing further removed from ostentation, than our Lord's use of those wonder-working powers with which he was endowed. His miracles were always remarkable for simplicity, for the absence of every appearance of pompous exhibition: he never wrought a marvel but when there was good to be done; and, in his hands, superhuman might was manifestly consecrated to the benefiting others, and not to the magnifying himself.

But let us admit that miraculous power might be possessed by one of ourselves, and that, along with it, there might be such measures of grace as would prevent any thing of pride or ostenta-

tion in its use. We may still find something to distinguish this man of superhuman energy from the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to this, let us ask any one of you, whether the inability to relieve misery be not almost as distressing as that misery itself? If I found one of my fellow-creatures dying from want, what wretchedness should I endure if I were absolutely destitute of all power of procuring him food! Whereas, on the other hand, with what unmingled gladness should I hasten to his dwelling, if I carried with me the means of supplying his necessities, if I had only to open the door, and plenty would flow into the dreary abode! I do not think that I could be sad at such a moment. My own cares might be many, my own grievances heavy; but that I could communicate happiness, would for the time make me happy; and the eye would be bright, and the voice would be joyous, as I said to the sufferer "Be of good cheer."

The like may especially be affirmed in regard of any case of sickness. How melancholy is it to stand over the bed of one writhing in pain, and to feel that the best which the best affection can do, is to weep and to pray; so utterly beyond all known remedies or assuagements is the malady whose victim is before us! O for the power of working a miracle! With what alacrity, what exultation, would any one of us command the disease to depart, if there were such energy in his word that it could suspend nature's laws. I am sure that there is not one of you, who, if he possessed the power, and heard of a fellow creature in terrible anguish, would not rush to the side of the sufferer, eager to employ the power on his own behalf, and enraptured with the thought of being able to relieve. Or, if the case were not one of acute pain, but only of defect in some bodily organ, with what pure, what unmixed satisfaction, should we exert ourselves on supplying what nature had denied.

There is something wonderfully interesting, but, at the same time, distressing, in the visiting the asylums which have been reared for the reception of the blind or the dumb. It is marvellous to observe what mental and moral progress may be made in spite of the deficiency; how the senses, which are

possessed, may be available to the very offices of those which are wanting, so that the blind child shall read the Bible with its fingers, and the dumb communicate in writing all that passes in its spirit. We do not hesitate to call it the finest exercise of a power, which is only just short of supernatural, that, when the eye refuses to collect the rays from the material creation, the hand can be instructed to gather in all the beauty and magnificence of that spiritual landscape which God hath developed in the pages of his word; and that upon the soul, which seemed devoted to everlasting midnight, because not accessible through the medium of speech, there is poured, through the eye, all that mighty illumination which hath flashed, in these last days, from "the Father of lights."

But, with every confession of the wonderfulness and beauty of the spectacle presented by an asylum whether for the blind or the dumb, it must be admitted that there is something distressing in the sight of numbers who never looked on the glory of the heavens, or never drank in the melody of speech. Which of you, then, would not feel himself a happy man, if suddenly invested with the power of bidding the blind behold the human face, and the dumb hear and use the human voice? We should all perhaps be ready to charge the possessor of such a power with something worse than stoicism, with a hardness of heart which made it strange that God should have endowed with so signal a gift, if he did not manifest the greatest alacrity in bestowing sight on the darkened eye-ball, and unchaining the speechless tongue; or if, when exercising his power, he did not show that to exercise it was a source of the intensest delight. And yet, my brethren, it does not appear—at least, not always—to have been with a feeling of pleasure that our blessed Lord relieved the woes to which flesh is heir. Oh, it is a strange contrast between the scene presented by our text and what probably would be the scene, if any amongst ourselves had the power of healing the deaf and the dumb. It shall be to one of you that this poor man is brought by anxious and supplicating friends. One of you shall be reputed able to unstop his ears and loosen his

are eager for his cure, come to you imploringly. It is no false rumor; you have the power; you are ready to exercise it. I see you rejoice in the opportunity; you can hardly speak the healing word for gladness at being able to confer so great a boon. Yes; this is natural, this would almost seem unavoidable; and yet, oh wonderful, it was not thus that our Redeemer did good. He manifested no feeling of pleasure. On the contrary, you might have thought it a pain to him to relieve misery; for the narrative tells us, that, at the instant of giving utterance to the omnipotent word, he showed signs as of a burdened and disquieted spirit: "He sighed"—not, he smiled; not, he rejoiced—but "He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

Now we really do not know a more affecting testimony to the fact, that our Lord was "a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief;" than is thus furnished by his sighing at the moment of working a benevolent miracle. If ever he experienced gladness of spirit, you would think that it must have been when communicating happiness—yet even then "He sighed." He sighed in the act of blessing, as though the boon were wrung from him, and he would rather have denied it. Neither is this a solitary instance of Christ's manifestation of grief when engaged in giving pleasure. We have often had occasion to point out to you that the tears, which he wept at the grave of Lazarus, were not tears for the dead. There is no necessity, in order to the establishing the comforting truth of Christ's perfect humanity, and of his sympathy with our griefs, that we should suppose him weeping at the grave of his friend, as any one of us might weep over a kinsman or child. Indeed, there is no argument for Christ's fellow-feeling with the bereaved, in the tears of which the bereaved so often make mention; for there is not one of us who could bewail the dead, if he were under the precise circumstances of Christ; and therefore the Mediator's tears can be no evidence of that which, blessed be his name, is incontestably established from other proofs, his thorough sympathy with the mourning. Send any one of you to the grave where a dear friend lies buried—send him with the power, and for the purpose, of re-

animating that friend—and he could not weep as he went; at least, if he wept, they would be tears of joy which he shed; for pleasure, like pain, can force drops from eyes which have been darkened by sin. But the tears of Christ were not tears of joy; for we read not only that he wept, but that “He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled;” and that “again groaning in himself, he came to the grave.” Hence there is no parrying the conclusion, that our blessed Savior was unhappy at the very moment when you would most have expected him to be happy, because on the point of making others happy; whilst all our foregoing statements, as to the pleasure which would be felt by any one of ourselves in the exercises of supernatural power, are only the more forcible, if the occasion of that exercise might bear any resemblance to the raising of Lazarus.

It is, therefore, no undue inference from the circumstance of Christ’s sighing at the instant of working the miracle before us, when we take it in evidence of a depression of spirit which would not give way before even that most happy-making thing, the making others happy. And again must we state that of all the incidental proofs—proofs not the less conclusive because easily overlooked—of our Lord’s having been “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” there is, perhaps, none of a more touching or plaintive character than is thus furnished by our text. Undoubtedly we vastly underestimate the sufferings of the Savior, when we confine them to scenes where persecution was open, and anguish apparent. Just because there is little said of what Jesus endured until we reach the dread things of Gethsemane and Calvary, it were strange, it were sinful, to conclude that he was not heavily oppressed through the whole of his life. When an apostle bids us “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself”—thus making “the contradiction of sinners,” which was not the thing of a moment, but of his every day, from first to last, the description of his endurances—he may be said to assert that suffering was his unmingled portion, as though, with one of old, his own illustrious type, he might pathetically have said, “My tears have been my meat day and night.” And we may not question that such was

his portion. He was a sacrifice from the cradle to the grave; every instant, because an instant of humiliation and endurance, added something to the mysterious and mighty oblation. How could it have been otherwise? for having come “unto his own,” and being rejected by “his own,” living in the midst of “a wicked and adulterous generation,” which he vainly strove to save from destruction, there must continually have been a pressure on his innocent spirit, a pressure all the more intense, because not betrayed by any outward sign.

The expression “acquainted with grief” is wonderfully touching, and perhaps singularly accurate. Grief was, as it were, his bosom friend; it had made way into his breast, and there set up its home. His was not an occasional meeting with grief; it was acquaintance, a deep, dark, bitter familiarity. Oh, when you call Christ’s afflictions to mind, afflictions endured “for us men and for our salvation,” then think not only of the garden and the cross; consider him as having been incessantly, as well as intensely, disquieted—momentarily on the cross, whence divine justice sought the penalties which ourselves had deserved. And if you want evidence of this continuousness of sorrow, the inconsiderable incident—inconsiderable only in that you might read it a hundred times and hardly pause to observe it—the inconsiderable incident mentioned in our text might suffice as a proof. What so gratifying a thing as the being able to do good? when can a good man feel so happy as in communicating happiness? If Christ were not gladdened in making others glad, when could he have been joyful? And, nevertheless, he was not then gladdened; it was then that “he sighed.” He had gone aside from the multitude, so that there was, perhaps, no one to observe him. His only companion was deaf, so that though he might have been seen to weep, he could not be heard to sigh. Therefore was the sigh quite, so to speak, between himself and his Father in heaven. It was as though he had taken advantage of the being alone and unnoticed, to gain a moment’s vent for that climbing sorrow which he was not willing to display before disciples who loved him. And I seem to need nothing more to tell me how continually that heart was

wrong, into which sin, which makes all our anguish, never had penetrated, than the simple recital that, before our blessed Savior uttered the word which was to unstop the ear and loosen the tongue, "he sighed;" "looking up to heaven, *he sighed*, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

But wherefore did Christ sigh? was it only in evidence of the general depression of a spirit, wearied and overwrought by contact with wickedness? or came the sigh from a consciousness that the individual before him would be injured rather than benefited, by the miracle about to be wrought? We cannot, of course, speak with any certainty in reply to these questions, forasmuch as the sacred historian gives no account of the feelings which then struggled in the mind our Lord. Yet there are sundry interpretations which we may put upon the sigh; and if we cannot determine the true, we may, perhaps, draw from each some material of instruction.

We may be sure, in the first place, as to what did not cause the sigh; it argued no distrust of his heavenly Father, though it followed immediately on his looking up to his abode. The looking up to heaven was rather to direct the deaf man's attention to the source of healing power, than to obtain a supply of that power. There was the same lifting up of the eyes on the occasion of the raising of Lazarus; and then Christ stated the reason of this public appeal to the Father. "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." He was always sure, you observe, of the ability to work a miracle; but on certain occasions he saw fit to preface the working by an appeal to God, in order to impress on spectators that his power was from above, and not, as had been blasphemously said, from beneath.

Hence, the sigh could have had no such connection with the looking up to heaven, as might argue mistrust of the Father whose will he had come down to accomplish. But, nevertheless, we may readily understand how, on the instant of working a miracle, a glance

towards heaven might cause Christ to sigh. Wherefore had he descended from that bright abode if not to achieve its being opened to the lost race of man? And wherefore did he work miracles, if not to fix attention on himself as the promised seed of the woman, who, through obedience and death, was to reinstate our lineage in the paradise from which they had been exiled for sin? There was a sufficiency in the satisfaction which he was about make, to remove the curse from every human being, and to place all the children of Adam in a more glorious position than their common parent had forfeited. But he knew too well that, in regard of multitudes, his endurances would be fruitless, at least, in the sense of obtaining their salvation, though they cannot be in that of vindicating the attributes of God, and leaving the impenitent self condemned at the judgment.

Therefore, it may be, did Christ sigh; and that, too, immediately after looking up to heaven. I can read the sigh; it is full of most pathetic speech. "Yonder," the Redeemer seems to say, "is the home of my Father, of the cherubim and the seraphim. I would fain conduct to that home the race which I have made one with Myself, by so assuming their nature as to join it with the divine. I am about to work another miracle—to make, that is, another effort to induce the rebellious to take Me as their leader to my glorious domain. But it will be fruitless; I foresee, but too certainly, that I shall still be "despised and rejected of men." Then who can wonder that a sigh was thus interposed between the looking up to heaven and the uttering the healing word? The eye of the Redeemer saw further than our own. It pierced the vault which bounds our vision, and beheld the radiant thrones which his agony would purchase for the children of men. And that men—men whom he loved with a love of which that agony alone gives the measure—should refuse these thrones, and thereby not only put from them happiness, but incur wretchedness without limit or end—must not this have been always a crushing thing to the Savior? and more especially when, by glancing at the glories which might have been theirs, he had heightened his thought of their madness and misery?

I am sure that were we striving to prevail on some wretched being to enter an asylum where he would not only be sheltered from imminent danger, but surrounded with all the material of happiness, a look at that asylum, with its securities and comforts, would cause us to feel sorer than ever at heart, as we turned to make one more endeavor, likely to be useless as every preceding, to overcome the obduracy which must end in destruction. Therefore ought we readily to understand why the Redeemer, bent only on raising to glory a race, of which he foresaw that myriads would voluntarily sink down to fire and shame, gave token of a distressed and disquieted spirit, between looking towards heaven and working a miracle—as though the look had almost made him reluctant for the work—“looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.”

But there may have been reasons, personal to the individual about to be healed, which caused Christ to preface the miracle with a sigh. We have spoken of the delight which it would yield to a benevolent man, if he could go into an asylum for the blind or the deaf, and communicate by a word the senses which were wanting in the objects around him. But did we not somewhat exaggerate, when we supposed that the pleasure would be quite unalloyed? It could hardly fail but that a suspicion would cross the mind of the individual, who had the power of giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, that, but too probably, there was some one in the group to whom it would be no blessing to obtain the deficient sense; who, if made to see, would but enslave himself to “the lust of the eye,” or who, if enabled to hear and to speak, would but listen to evil, and employ his tongue in dishonoring his God. We know, too well, how largely does our every sense give inlet to temptation; so that, possibly, the want of one of these senses might often cause the soul to be assaulted with less vehemence from without. And it is easy to believe that a blind person, to whom sight were suddenly and miraculously given, would find an inundation, as it were, of new and strange desires, rushing on him through those magic organs which, like Satan on the mountain, show us “all the kingdoms of the world

and their glory;” and that a deaf person, who should obtain instantaneously the hearing ear, and the speaking tongue, would be so bewildered by the new process of receiving and communicating thought, and so enabled to sin in new ways, that, if there were question only of the advantageousness of his condition in regard of another world, he had better have been confined to the scanty intelligence which may be communicated in spite of defectiveness of organs, than have acquired abilities which may be so perilously abused.

Hence, it might not be wholly without some sentiment of apprehension and fear, that the benevolent man would pronounce the word which was to give sight to the blind, or speech to the dumb. It may be that, notwithstanding the flow of pleasurable feelings which would seem necessarily to attend the putting forth a power communicative of such benefit and blessing, he would sigh with the Ephphatha on his lips, as the thought occurred, that the senses, which he was about to impart, might only prove avenues of evil, and be desecrated to the service of sin. But with Christ, who could read the human heart, and foresee the human life, there could not have been doubtfulness as to the moral issue of the miracle. He must have unerringly known whether the individual before him would be healed in soul as well as body: whether the wonder, of which he was the subject, would lead to faith in the prophet by whom it was wrought; whether the organs which he was about to obtain, would be employed on the glorifying, or on the dishonoring, God. And perhaps he foreknew that the man, when healed, would be found amongst his persecutors, and oh, if so, how could he but sigh, sigh deeply and painfully, as he considered what sin had made the human heart, so hard that even miracles would not soften it, nor produce in it love towards a heavenly benefactor? Indeed, indeed, if there were such an exhibition of insensibility and ingratitude present to his mind, well might he sigh. Ah, men and brethren, if there can be sighs in heaven, he must still sigh as he “poureth his benefits” on every one amongst us, benefits which are too often received as mere things of course, benefits which, if not miraculous, are only not so because of their frequency, and which,

alas, fail to bind us more devotedly to his service.

Or, if the Redeemer did not know that the man whom he was about to heal, would join himself to his enemies; if, on the contrary, he knew that he would be of the few who acknowledged him as the Messiah; still he was too well aware, we may believe, of the dangerousness of the faculties which his word would bestow, to bestow them without a sigh. It was language, of which the man was henceforward to be master, the power of speaking and of being spoken with. And Christ could not give this but with a sigh. He knew that the power of speaking was especially the power of sinning: that no member was so difficult of control, and so liable to offend, as the tongue. There are many statements in the Bible, in regard to the importance of speech, the difficulty of regulating our words, and the danger of sinning with our lips. But I know of nothing more emphatic and expressive than this sigh of our Lord, when considered as indicating that what he bestowed, he bestowed with apprehension. As with the tears which Christ wept over Jerusalem, there is more in this sigh than in lengthened and heart-touching speech. The tongue unloosed with a sigh, the sigh of him who had no sin to sigh for, is the most affecting of all testimonies that the tongue cannot be used without peril. It might do more than whole sermons on the guilt of idle words, to make us watchful in keeping "the door of our lips," were we only to bear in mind this sigh of the Redeemer. Oh, when tempted to the light jest, and, yet more, to the profane allusion—when inclined to employ on what is frivolous, or malicious, or impure, that high faculty which God bestowed that we might make creation vocal with his praise; then, if you cannot recollect any elaborate arguments which establish the special sinfulness of sins of the tongue, at least you might recall the simple narrative before us; and it might tend to make and keep you fearful of misusing and desecrating the power of speech, to remember that your Savior could not impart this power, without betokening his consciousness how perilous it was: "He sighed," before he could bring himself to say to the deaf and dumb man, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

But we alluded, in an early part of our discourse, to the parabolic character which seems attached to the miracles of our Lord; and, inclining to the belief that there is no miracle recorded in the New Testament, which does not serve to illustrate certain truths in the christian dispensation, we are reluctant to leave the narrative before us without glancing at its typical instruction. And here we need hardly refer to the general fact, that the sicknesses of the soul are analogous to those of the body; or that man, considered as an immortal being, requires healing processes, similar to those required by the lame, the deaf, and the blind. It can scarcely be called a figure of speech, when we describe the soul of a man, not yet renewed by the Spirit of God, as deficient in the powers of hearing, and seeing, and speaking. For the soul must be judged relatively to that higher world of which she was originally the citizen, and her possession of faculties must be determined by testing her ability for the employments and enjoyments of the scene for which she was designed. But who can disguise from himself, that, in spiritual things, he is by nature deficient in senses and organs, as he would be in earthly, if unable to see, to walk, to hear, to speak, to taste! The unrenewed soul has no eye for the glories of heaven, no feet for running the way of God's commandments, no ear for the sweet music of the Gospel, no voice for the praises of Christ, no relish for that bread which is "for the life of the world." And forasmuch as it is only through Christ in his office of Mediator, that those influences are communicated which repair the decayed, or impart the destroyed faculties, we may justly regard our blessed Savior, whilst working miracles on the body, as both teaching what was needful for the soul, and representing himself as its appointed physician. Hence, in Christ's unstopping the ears and loosening the tongue, of the man that was brought to him as he passed through Decapolis, every one may find the outlines of a symbolical lesson, as to the necessity for a divine operation on our spiritual organs, ere the tidings of redemption can penetrate the soul, and the utterances of thanksgiving be heard in return.

But more may have been represented than this general fact. The man does

not seem to have come of himself; and there is no evidence whatsoever that he had faith in Christ's power to heal. Indeed, as we have endeavored to show you, Christ took pains to fix attention on himself as the worker of the miracle, as though to provide for faith following, if it did not precede the cure. The friends or relatives of the deaf and dumb man had faith in our Lord; this faith moved them to solicit a miracle, and was recompensed by its being wrought. And there is great encouragement in every such record of blessings procured through the intercession of friends. When I read of parents or relations leading the dumb to Jesus, and soliciting, in his name, what he could not solicit for himself, I gain assurance that parents or relations may bring children to the regenerating waters of baptism, and entreat on their behalf those gifts of the Spirit, which they are yet too young to entreat for themselves. I thank God for the record of miracles, in whose subjects there was faith; I thank him still more for the record, when the faith was not found in the party that was healed, but in the party who conducted the diseased person to Christ. Oh, we may do much for those whom we love, whilst they are unable, or even whilst unwilling, to do any thing for themselves. We may bring them to Christ; we may entreat Christ to heal them; and such narratives as that which has been under review, warrant the hope, yea, even the expectation, that, if we ask in faith, the Redeemer will put forth his miraculous power.

But there is yet another significant fact which ought not to be overlooked. Our Lord led the afflicted man aside from the multitude: did he not thereby tell them, who may be visited with any desire for spiritual cure, that it is not in the throng and bustle of the world that they may expect the renewal of their senses and powers? that they should separate themselves from distracting

associations, seeing that it is in privacy and retirement that he is ordinarily pleased to work a moral miracle, and reproduce in the soul the lost image of God? He can heal you any where: he can unstop the ear and loosen the tongue whilst you are in the hurry of the crowd, or when you have sought the secrecy of the closet. But he loves the solitude: if you wish him to work a miracle, prove that you wish it by going aside from the multitude, detaching yourselves from a world that "lieth in wickedness," breaking away from the company of his enemies—and then may you hope that he will meet you, and say unto you, with as much of power as of graciousness, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

Will he say it with a sigh? Indeed, so great is the corruption of our nature, and so vast the disorganization around us, that the portion of a renewed man has often to be described in the words of St. Paul: "Without were fightings, within were fears." To convert, is to consign to a hard conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And Christ might sigh in speaking the word which gives spiritual health, remembering that he quickens men to the painful and perilous task of crucifying themselves, of offering themselves "a living sacrifice" unto God.

But if "heaviness may endure for a night," "joy cometh in the morning." The victory is sure with Christ for a leader, though the contest be severe. And if it be with a sigh that he pronounces the Ephphatha now—with a sigh, because to be a believer is to be persecuted and afflicted, at war with the world, at war with one's self—it shall be with a smile that he pronounces the Ephphatha hereafter, saying to the everlasting doors, "Be ye opened," that my people may enter my kingdom: "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest."

S E R M O N X I .

THE LATTER RAIN.

*** Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain : so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.*—ZECHARIAH X. 1.**

It is not necessary that we inquire whether as originally delivered, these words included spiritual blessings or were limited to temporal. The former are so frequently illustrated or shadowed out in Scripture by the latter, that we may safely treat the passage as a direction and a promise which have to do generally with prayer, and particularly with prayer for the communication of divine grace. In order, however, to the right understanding of the words, you are to observe that there were two seasons of the year at which rain was peculiarly needed and looked for in Judea. The one was in autumn, at the seed-time ; the other was in the spring, when the corn had to be brought to an ear and filled. The rain which fell at the one, is spoken of in Scripture, as "the former rain ;" that at the other, as "the latter ;" and you find the two mentioned together when God would covenant to do great things for his land. Thus, in the Book of Deuteronomy, "If ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain." Thus again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season ; he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of harvest." And once more, in Hosea, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

But the "latter rain" is often mention-

ed by itself, as though specially needed to the making available the labors of the husbandman. Thus you read in the Book of Job ; "They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain." And Solomon says, in the Book of Proverbs, "In the light of the king's countenance is life ; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain." Jeremiah, also, when describing the utter desolation brought by sin upon the land, exclaims ; "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain." The want of this latter rain would evidently be peculiarly distressing ; it might not do more towards causing famine than the want of the former ; but occurring at a time when the husbandman had fully done his part, and was expecting to reap the fruit of his labors, the horrors of dearth would be aggravated through the bitterness of disappointment ; and there would, moreover, be less opportunity of providing sustenance from other quarters than if "the former" rain had failed, and thus long notice had been given of an insufficient harvest.

We may find, as we proceed with our discourse, that in applying the text to spiritual things, great attention should be given to this mention of "the latter rain" rather than of "the former." At present it is sufficient to have pointed out to you the times at which rain ordinarily fell in Judea ; you will hence be aware of the importance of the blessing for which the people are directed to ask. We will now, without further preface, enter on the consideration of several great truths which appear derivable from the passage, when taken, in its largest sense,

as a direction to prayer. We will not attempt, beforehand, to specify these truths, but rather leave them to open successively as we prosecute our examination. Let us only ask rain of the Lord, let us only entreat the aids and teachings of his Spirit, without which we may not hope to enter thoroughly into the meaning of Scripture, and it may, indeed, be for our profit that we study the direction, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain;" and that we hearken to the promise, "The Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

Now we shall begin with looking at the direction as having to do literally with the rain, with those showers which descend in due season to water the earth, "that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater." Alas, how difficult is it to keep God in mind as the great First Cause, when there is a mechanism of second causes through which he is pleased to conduct his operations and communicate blessings! If things ordinarily occur in a settled course, we speedily forget that this course is, after all, but the law which God is pleased to prescribe to himself, to be followed only while it shall seem good to his infinite wisdom, and swerved from whensoever he shall think fit to suspend his own laws. If, for example, there be a time of the year at which rain is accustomed to fall, how readily do we expect rain at that time, just as though there were a certain set of causes, which, working always, and with unvarying regularity, would be sure, at corresponding seasons, to produce corresponding results. Men seem practically to have but little remembrance, that the mainspring of all the mechanism is in the hands of an invisible Creator; that it is not from what goes on in the hidden laboratories of what they call nature that season succeeds season, and shower and sunshine alternate with so much of beautiful and beneficent order, but that the whole arrangement is momentarily dependant on the will and energy of that supreme Being who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." It is needful, we might almost say, that God should occasionally interrupt the ordinary course of things, that he should suspend the laws which

he has been pleased to impress on the natural world, if only that he may keep himself from being forgotten, and compel some recognition of his all-pervading influence from those who actually "live in him, and move, and have their being."

But whilst there is this known proneness amongst us to the substituting second causes for the first, whilst we are confessedly so ready to look to the laws and the mechanism of nature, to do for us what can be done only by the direct and immediate agency of God, how important, how instructive, such an injunction as this; "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain!" You are to lay the emphasis on its being "the time of the latter rain," the season, that is, at which rain might be commonly expected; at which year after year, it had been accustomed to fall, and at which, therefore, a boastful, or rather an infidel philosophy, might have argued that it would continue to fall, in obedience to fixed and immutable laws. If, from some cause or another, there should be want of rain at seasons when it was not usually wanted, when it was not the time for either "the former rain" or "the latter," perhaps this boastful philosophy itself would allow that there was place or occasion for prayer. We do not, indeed, mean that the philosophy would necessarily assent to the possible usefulness of prayer in the supposed emergence: it is far more likely that it would entrench itself within its maxims as to the fixedness of nature's laws, and the consequent vanity of any expectation that these laws would be interfered with in order to the meeting our wishes or wants. But, at least, philosophy would here confess, that if the rain fell at all, it would fall not through the working of mere second causes; and that, therefore, though prayer must be practically worthless, as pleading against a firmly-settled ordinance, it was still so far in place as that only the Being, to whom it was addressed, had power to give rain at so unwonted a time. If, however, it be actually "the time of the latter rain," then will a prayer for rain appear to this philosophy utterly unreasonable or preposterous, as if we were not content to leave natural causes to work out their invariable effects; or as if we wanted to make a parade of the power and efficacy of prayer, and there-

fore directed it to a boon which we knew that we should receive, whether we asked it or not.

But God, on the contrary, says: "Ask ye rain in the time of the latter rain." Oh, what a lesson to us that we reckon not, so to speak, on the seasons; that we presume not to expect any good merely because the time is come round at which, in the ordinary course of his dealings, God has been used to bestow that good. A blessing may have been long and regularly communicated; but we are not to count on the regularity of the communication, as though it proved some immutable law, which must continue to work out the accustomed result: it may be "the time of the latter rain;" the experience of a lengthened course of years may warrant the expectation of rain; and the clouds on the firmament may seem big with the usual supply—but God has yet to issue his command; God has yet to unseal the fountain; and therefore there is still place for prayer, there is still need for prayer: it is "the time of the latter rain," but, on that very account, it is the time also for the asking of rain. To ask it at another time might be asking a miracle, a departure from God's ordinary course, and we cannot be said to have warrant for that. But to ask it at this time, is to ask what we know is according to God's will; and "this," saith St. John, "is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

Beware, then, of taking for granted that mercies will continue to descend in the order, and at the times, which may have long been observed: there is no such likely way of stopping the supply, as the failing to recognize that the fountain is with God. God describes himself as "a jealous God;" and it must move him to jealousy, whensoever, in any degree, we substitute his instruments for himself, or look to the channel as if it were the spring. The long continuance of a mercy at a particular season may indeed be said to involve a kind of promise—for God has so constituted us that we naturally expect what we have often experienced; and a divine promise is not only that which is registered in the divine word, but that also which is conveyed through the moral constitution received at God's hands. But let it be

remembered that a divine promise, so far from proving it unnecessary that we ask, should itself be our great reason for asking. God's promises are the warrants for man's prayers. What God has promised, may be asked for in the perfect confidence "that it is according to his will;" and since the promises are conditional, their fulfillment being made dependent on our seeking, or inquiring for, the covenanted blessings, we may not only be encouraged in our prayers by God's promises, but ought in no degree to reckon on promises, except as we make them foundations for prayers. God may be said to have promised rain "in the time of the latter rain:" but just because it is a time at which rain has been promised, therefore it is a time at which prayer should be made.

And so with every mercy. The recurrence of the time at which God has been used to bestow it, should not make you expect to receive it again without asking, but should make you ask in the full confidence of receiving. The sabbath, for example, is a "time of the latter rain:" rain is then used to fall—God's Spirit descends in gracious showers for the refreshment of the church. The time of the administration of christian ordinances is a "time of the latter rain," God commonly using the preaching of his word and the dispensing of his sacraments, to the conveyance of grace to his waiting people. But because these are times "of the latter rain," shall they not also be times for the praying for rain? Oh, never ought your prayers to be so fervent or importunate. You are, as it were, on the top of Carmel; you see the cloud rising out of the sea; but you must not take for granted that there will be "abundance of rain:" God may command the cloud back into the sea, yea, he may be expected to do this, if you do not wrestle with him in prayer. Therefore, on the Sabbath morn, because it is the Sabbath morn, the morning of grace, redouble your prayers for grace; on sacramental opportunities, because they are God's chosen occasions of imparting his Spirit, cry more earnestly than ever for that Spirit. Think not that the favorableness of the season can make the necessity for prayer less, whereas it does but make the encouragement to prayer greater. Substitute not the means of grace for grace, as

though, when the former were vouchsafed, the latter would be sure to follow; ah, there may be the clouds and not the showers; and, therefore, remember ye the precept of our text, and "ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain."

Now we have thus endeavored to show you that the circumstance of its being "a time of rain"—whether the natural rain or the spiritual—so far from furnishing a reason why we should not ask for rain, is itself the great argument for our asking; inasmuch as it proves that we have God's promise on our side, and the promise of God is always the warrant, but never the substitute for the prayer of man. But all that has preceded would have been equally appropriate, had "the former rain," not "the latter," been specified in the text: we have simply spoken of the time as being "a time of rain;" a time at which it is God's ordinary course to communicate a blessing; and we have warned you against expecting that blessing, without asking for it; we have endeavored to prove to you, that your reason for expecting should be your reason also for asking.

Let us not, however, pass without comment the mention of "the latter rain:" when the reference of the prophet is supposed to be to spiritual rain, there are special truths to be gathered from his speaking of "the latter rain" rather than of "the former." We have explained to you that "the latter rain" was that which fell in the spring, and which was instrumental to the bringing the corn into the ear, and filling it; so that, if this rain failed, the husbandman would be disappointed of his harvest, notwithstanding all his previous industry, skill, and anxiety. He was indeed dependent also on "the former rain," that which fell at the seed-time; for the grain would not germinate, and send up the tender shoot, unless the ground were watered by the fertilizing showers. But there would be a yet more bitter disappointment, for there would be the utter loss of much labor, the fruitless expenditure of much effort and hope, if "the latter rain" were withheld; and consequently, there was even greater reason for his asking rain in "the time of the latter rain" than in that of "the former:" if "the former

rain" were withheld, he might make some other use of his capital and enterprise; but if "the latter," his disaster scarce admitted of repair.

Now without endeavoring to trace too narrowly the parallel to these in spiritual things, we may safely say that there is something very affecting and admonitory in the mention of "the latter rain." It is the rain needed for filling the ear, and fitting it for the sickle. Take it metaphorically, and it is the grace needed for ripening the believer, and fitting him for heaven. The former rain may be considered that which fell upon him at his baptism, or, perhaps more accurately, at his conversion, when he set himself, according to the directions of the prophet, to "break up his fallow ground, and sow to himself in righteousness." And he has been enabled, through the continued influences of the Spirit of God, to bring forth "first the blade, and then the ear," advancing in the christian life, and adorning the doctrine of the Savior. But oh, there is now a danger of his falling into security, of his reckoning too confidently on the harvest, of his concluding that God will certainly complete a work so auspiciously begun, so happily carried on, and that he himself can have nothing to do but leave God to "perfect that which concerneth" him. True, indeed, it is God alone who can complete what God alone commenced; and true also it is, that God is not willing to leave his work unfinished. But he may withhold "the latter rain," after having given "the former," if he see the husbandman presuming on a promise, in place of persevering in prayer. He does not leave the husbandman to ripen the corn, just as he did not require of him to make the seed shoot; for there is not a single stage in the great process of spiritual renewal, at which it is ought else but God's grace, which, acting on the heart, brings out features of the image which sin fearfully defaced. But whilst it is not with the husbandman, but with God, to ripen the corn, God may make his ripening it depend on the exercise of faith, and the importunity of prayer. He may give "the latter rain," if the husbandman, conscious of his dependence upon God for the harvest, continue meekly to supplicate the necessary showers: he may withhold that

rain, if the husbandman, calculating on the ordinary course of his dealings, grow remiss in petitioning, and give up his fields to the presumed certainties of the season.

There is no point in the life of a christian, at which he can do without the supply of God's grace; none at which he can expect the supply, if he be not cultivating the spirit and habit of prayer. It is not the mere circumstance of his having long followed the narrow path of life, which can be taken in proof that he will follow it to the end. If he have hitherto walked with God, it has been through his having sought and obtained such communications of the Divine Spirit, as have enabled him to maintain his separation from a world lying in wickedness. And if he is to persevere in walking with God, it must be through perseverance in these acts of faith and of prayer: if he think himself sure to go on, because he supposes that he has acquired a certain velocity which will suffice, without further effort, to carry him to the end, alas, he shows only that, even in advancing, he has failed to observe by what his progress was caused. That progress can never be such that he may dispense with the assistance, without which he could not have made a successful beginning. There was "the former rain," else there could not have been even the green blade; there must be also "the latter rain," else will he "bring no fruit to perfection." But it is the same thing, it is rain, which is needed at both times, or for both ends: there is no change in the instrumentality; he could not have begun without Divine grace, and Divine grace alone can give completeness to the work.

This is among the simplest, the most elementary of doctrines; and yet it is one of which the believer requires to be often and earnestly reminded. When a man begins in religion, his conviction of sin, and his sense of danger, conspire to the urging him to cry unto God for assistance and guidance. But when he has made some way, there is fear of his forgetting the agency to which alone he is indebted for progress. Or, if he do not forget the agency, he comes to expect it as a matter of course—as the husbandman the rain at the accustomed seasons—and he grows more remiss in prayer for God's Spirit, even whilst re-

lying on the aids of that Spirit. Beware of this, ye who are growing old in a christian profession. Ye are not secure of having more of God's Spirit, merely because ye have already had much. Ye must not slacken in prayer for that Spirit, because it is only "the latter rain" which is now needed, and you may think that God will be sure to ripen what he has so long been cultivating. Rather think with yourselves, how grievous would it be that the harvest should be one of shame, when the seed-time has been one of promise! How sad to miss "the latter rain," after having had "the former," and thus lose the labor of years, when on the point, it may be, of gathering in the sheaves! Oh, pray the more earnestly, strive the more intensely, the nearer you stand to the termination of your course. I would say to the believer, even on his death-bed, a good hope, a scriptural hope, is that which expresses itself in cries for God's grace. Till you are with God in heaven, no language can be so appropriate as that which entreats that God would be with you on earth. It is indeed "the time of the latter rain;" and those dense clouds, which are the heraldry of dissolution, are commonly charged with showers of consolation; for God may be expected to be doubly with his people, as they pass "through the valley of the shadow of death." But God will still be "inquired of" for what he stands ready to bestow; and the best confidence for the dying, as the best for the living, is confidence in prayer as laying hold on a promise. Be it then "the time of the latter rain"—"the latter rain," because but few more showers can be needed; "the time" of that rain, because, in his ordinary course, God is then wont to give largely of his grace—on neither account slacken in prayer; rather, on both accounts, be fervent in prayer. There is the better reason for expecting an answer to prayer, but none for supposing that prayer is no longer needed: he alone can safely have done with offering prayer for grace, who has begun the anthem of praise in glory; and, therefore, "Be not weary in well-doing," but "ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain."

But now let us consider whether "the time of the latter rain" may not be a season in the history of the church, and

whether, when so understood, there is not a great and neglected duty enjoined by the text. It is certainly to be gathered from the tenor of Scripture, that, as "the time of the end" approaches, that time on which prophecy has thrown its most emphatic descriptions, there will be a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Even the prediction of Joel, which St. Peter quotes as having had reference to the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, would seem to be still waiting an ampler accomplishment; for the prophet associates the promised gift of the Spirit with the coming of "the great and terrible day of the Lord," and thus prepares us for not expecting that gift in all its largeness, until the time shall be at hand when Christ is to reappear, and set up visibly his throne on the wreck of all earthly dominion. But, at all events, there is no dispute that the prophecy refers generally to the christian dispensation, and that it assigns, as one of the privileges of that dispensation, a larger measure of spiritual influence. When St. Peter adduces the prediction as that which was to "come to pass in the last days," he undoubtedly applies it to the days in which we live, as well as to those in which he spake; these must be amongst "the last days," whatever the view taken of the prophetic chronology; and therefore are they days to which the great promise belongs, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."

Hence the present time is "the time of the latter rain:" the time of "the former rain" was that of earlier and preparatory dispensations, when the world was being made ready for a fuller revelation; but now that the Holy Ghost has entered specially on the office of guide and instructor to the church, it is the time of "the latter rain." There is to be no higher evidence of the truth of christianity, no opening of more direct intercourse between earth and heaven: we are in the enjoyment of those final advantages for securing happiness beyond the grave, which were longed for, but in vain, by them on whom only "the former rain" fell; many prophets and kings having desired to see the things which we see, and not having seen them, and to hear the things which we hear, and not having heard them. But though it is thus "the time of the latter rain," because, generally, that time must

include the whole christian dispensation, and because perhaps, in a stricter sense, it must comprehend such days as our own, which are not without signs of the second coming of Christ, yet it does not follow that "the latter rain" will fall; as though the heavens must be opened merely because it is the season for the showers. Our blessed Savior, when delivering counsels which were undoubtedly to serve for the instruction of the church to "the time of the end," spake thus in regard of the Spirit: "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." The dispensation which he was introducing, was to be emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit; the dispensation throughout which the Spirit was to "abide" as "a Comforter" with the church; and yet, you see, the asking for that Spirit is still made the condition on which it should be given.

It is the same as with prophecies of the restoration of Israel, and with promises of gladness and peace to the long exiled people. Nowhere do you find these prophecies and promises more copiously uttered than in the thirty-sixth chapter of the book of Ezekiel—but then, observe how this chapter concludes, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God had just declared that he would do this and that thing: he had made no conditions, but spoken as of a fixed, irreversible, purpose; and nevertheless, as if to remind us of a condition, which is always involved if not always expressed, where a divine promise is passed, he adds that he must yet be "inquired of by the house of Israel," in order to his accomplishing what he had announced.

Thus also with regard to the progress of Messiah's kingdom, the march of christianity towards universal dominion. God hath promised great things. He hath not intended that the vast blessings of redemption should, even in appearance, remain limited to certain sections of the family of man. Though, for wise ends, he hath permitted a long struggle between darkness and light, he has decreed the termination of that struggle, having given assurance of a time when all shall know him "from the least unto

the greatest," when "the kingdoms of the world" shall become "the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ." But he will yet be "inquired of" for these things, to do them for us. He requires of us that we exert ourselves for the spread of christianity; and he requires that we entreat of him the accomplishment of his gracious declarations. Have we not failed in both particulars: and perhaps even more egregiously in the latter than in the former? Without pausing to examine what proportion our efforts have borne to our means, whether we have, in any due measure, employed our resources on the arduous, but glorious, work of making Christ known to the heathen, let us inquire as to the frequency and intenseness of our prayers for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and shall we not find but too much cause to confess that we have verily been remiss in a duty, which is second to none in urgency, and to none in hopefulness? The prosperity of the church at home, the progress of our holy religion abroad, these are not so much dependent on any external machinery, as on the quickening, renewing, and strengthening influences of the Holy Ghost. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

And these influences of the Holy Ghost are promised in answer to prayer. But do we often make them the subject of prayer? Do we in our closets, do we in our families, cry much unto God that he would fulfil his promises in the bestowment of his Spirit? I do believe, without indulging in exaggerated speech, that we have in our possession the means of overthrowing the idolatries of the world, and erecting the Sanctuary of God on the wreck of the temples of heathenism. But I do not believe this, because of the magnificent, the unequalled, resources which God in his providence, has given into our keeping. I do not believe this, because it may almost be said of our colonies, that they are planted on every land, and of our fleets, that they cover every sea. Perish the boastful computations which, after drawing out our political and commercial ascendancy, would infer that we must be competent to the covering the earth with the knowledge of Christ. But I believe this, because I believe in the power of the Holy Ghost to renew the face of the

world, and in the power of prayer to obtain the operations of that divine agent. I believe this, because I believe that there is a goodly company in our land who pray the prayer of faith, and who have, therefore, only to be diligent in asking "of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain," to insure the descent of showers which shall cause the waste places to rejoice, and "blossom as the rose." But if the faithful pray not for the rain, it will be nothing, as heretofore it has done little towards evangelizing the globe, that we have national resources for the propagation of truth, such as were never yet committed to any people under heaven. Some inconsiderable province, some state undistinguished in the scale of nations, unendowed, to all appearance, with means for high enterprise, may yet take the lead in the honored work of subduing the kingdoms to the Lord our Redeemer, because it will take the lead in the undoubted duty of beseeching of God to pour out his Spirit. Let us remember and be warned by this. Let each consider, and examine, whether he may not have verily been guilty herein, perhaps never praying, or praying but listlessly and formally, for the promised descent of the Holy Ghost. Our lot is cast in the last days, in "the time of the latter rain." We are not without our signs, in the march of events, in the aspect of society, in the accomplishment of prophecy, that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Now then is the time for earnest, united, importunate prayer for the Spirit of God. Wonders may be accomplished; a nation may be "born in a day;" "the ends of the earth may see the salvation of the Lord;" O "ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest;" "ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; and the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

There is something very beautiful in the terms of this promise; but we have time only for a hasty notice. The "bright clouds," or, as the marginal reading has it, "lightnings," are the harbingers, or forerunners of the rain; and God, you see, declares that he will make these, before he sends the showers. Thus he exercises faith; he does not immediately answer the prayer, but requires his

people still to "wait" on him; he will "make bright clouds" for their encouragement, but they must persevere in supplication if they would have showers for their refreshment. Ay, and to them that "wait upon the Lord," there may be clouds, but are they not "bright clouds?" the stripes of light are painted on their darkness; the murkiest cloud which can rise on the firmament of the believer has a gilded side: "the Sun of righteousness" shines on it; and so truly is the time of tears the time also of "the latter rain," that, if these "bright clouds" betoken a season of affliction, they are quickly followed by communications of grace. God may bring the cloud over his people, and as Elihu saith, "Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds;" but if the world see it not, the believer may; and God brings the cloud, that its brightness being acknowledged, in and through the acknowledgement of his doing all things well, he may then send "a gracious rain on his inheritance, and refresh it when it is weary."

And the showers which God sends are for the clothing with richer verdure his garden, which is the church. "To every one grass in the field." We may receive

the Spirit; but we do but grieve, we do but quench it, if its influence be not visible on our walk and conversation. If there be not more and brighter grass in the field, we deceive ourselves if we think that there can be more of saving grace in the heart.

But how large is the promise—"To every one grass in the field." Here is evidence that "the time of the latter rain" is especially that "time of the end" when falsehood is at length to give way before truth, and the trials of christianity are to issue in its triumph. "To every one grass in the field,"—all shall know the Lord, all shall be righteous. Blessed and glorious prospect! There may be reason for thinking that the regenerated earth shall be enamelled with the loveliness which sparkled in paradise, ere the dark blight of sin dimmed the lustre; but, at the least, here is a moral verdure of surpassing richness, and I ask not the visions of a material luxuriance, when we have thus the assurance of an universal righteousness. O Spirit of the living God, the parched and stricken earth waits thy descent: come down, in answer to our prayers, that the valleys and mountains may no longer lie waste.

S E R M O N X I I .

THE LOWLY ERRAND.

"And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them."—MATTHEW XXI. 3.

You will all probably remember the portion of our Lord's history with which these words are connected. Christ was about to make his last entry into Jerusalem, where he was to seal his doctrine with his death, and offer him-

self in sacrifice for the sins of the world. There was a prophecy which had distinctly announced that the Messiah should enter the city "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." That this prophecy might not be unfulfilled,

our Lord determined to make his approach to Jerusalem in the manner which Zechariah had indicated.

In order to this, we read that when they "were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me." The remainder of the direction is contained in our text. The thing enjoined on the disciples had all the appearance of an act of robbery; and it might well be expected that they would encounter opposition. But Christ provided against this, telling them what answer to make if any one questioned their right to the ass and the colt, and assuring them that this answer would save them from molestation. And so it came to pass. The disciples went as they had been directed; the ass and colt were found at the precise spot which had been described; the owners interfered to prevent what seemed like the seizing of their property; but the simple words with which Christ had furnished his messengers removed all objections, and the ass and colt were allowed to depart.

This is one of those occurrences to which we may easily fail to attach due importance, and which contain instruction not to be detected by a cursory glance. The more prominent events in the history of Jesus, the great things which befell him, and the wonderful which he wrought, attract and fix attention; and we perhaps labor to extract from them the lessons with which they are fraught. But minute things we may comparatively overlook, and so lose much which is calculated to strengthen faith or regulate practice. Possibly, there is often as much to admire and imitate, where there is little of show in the outward action and duty, as where the thing done overwhelms us by its magnificence, or that enjoined by its arduousness. Every one stands in amazement by the grave of Lazarus, and looks with awe on the Redeemer as, with a single word, he reanimates the dead. But few may pause to acknowledge equal tokens of superhuman ability, as Christ sends Peter to find a piece of money in the mouth of a fish, or two of his disciples to bring an ass from the neighboring village. Every one admits the greatness of the obedi-

ence when Levi abandons the receipt of custom, and the difficulty of the injunction, when the young man is bidden to sell the whole of his possessions. But few, comparatively, may observe how christian obedience was taxed, when apostles were sent on such an errand as is now to be reviewed, or when the owners of the ass and the colt surrendered them on being told that they were needed by Christ. Let us, then, devote a discourse to the considering an incident which is less likely than many to attract by its evident wonderfulness; but which may be found, on inquiry, to attest most decisively the mission of Christ, and to furnish lessons of the first moment to ourselves.

Now the Evangelist, so soon as he has related how Jesus sent his disciples on the errand in question, remarks: "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," and then proceeds to quote the words of Zechariah. Here the representation undoubtedly is, that Jesus sent for the ass and the colt on purpose that he might accomplish an ancient prediction, which, by universal consent, had respect to the Messiah. An impostor would have done the same. Had a deceiver arisen, professing to be the Christ, he would of course have endeavored to establish a correspondence between himself and the deliverer whom seers had beheld in their visions.* Wheresoever the thing predicted were such that its seeming accomplishment might be contrived, he would naturally have set himself to the bringing round what should pass for fulfilment. And certainly the prophecy of Zechariah is one which a false Christ might have managed to accomplish. There was nothing easier than to have arranged for entering Jerusalem in the manner indicated by the prophet: any one who pretended to be the Christ, and who knew that the riding into the city on an ass was one appointed sign of the Christ, could have taken care that this sign at least should be his, whatever the particulars in which he might fail to give proof. We do not, then, bring Christ's entering Jerusalem in the manner foretold by Zechariah, as any convincing evidence of the truth of his pretensions: there was, indeed, the ac-

* See Sermon 8.

complishment of a prophecy, but it was a prophecy of which on the showing of the Evangelist, Jesus himself arranged the accomplishment, and which an impostor might, without difficulty, have equally fulfilled. It was necessary that the thing predicted should come to pass, otherwise, as you must all see, there would have been a flaw in the credentials of our Lord: for as the riding on the ass into Jerusalem had been distinctly foretold, he could not have been the Christ had he not thus entered the city. Hence the accomplishment of the prophecy in question prevented an objection rather than furnished a proof: it prevented an objection, because the not having ridden into Jerusalem might have been urged in evidence that Jesus could not be the Christ: but it furnished no proof, because a deceiver might have contrived to make his entry as the prophet had announced.

But if we may not dwell on the incident before us as proving Christ divine through the witness of fulfilled prophecy, let us consider whether there be not the witness of more than human prescience and power. And here, again, we must proceed with caution and limitation. For just as there may be contrivance to produce the apparent accomplishment of prophecy, there may be to effect the apparent display of supernatural attributes. There was—at least there may have been, a display of superhuman knowledge and power. Christ told his disciples, with the greatest minuteness, where they should find the animals, and what words would induce the owners to allow their being taken. If you read the accounts in the several Evangelists, you will perceive that he went into the nicest particulars. There was to be an ass tied, and a colt with her. The colt was to be one on which never man had sat. The place was to be immediately on entering the village, and where two ways met. The owners were to make objection, but to withdraw that objection on being told, “The Lord hath need of them.” Now, if this were not miracle, the owners having been supernaturally acted on, was it not prophecy? Christ predicted certain occurrences, and when all came to pass as he had said, was there not proof of his being gifted with more than human foresight? Yes; if the whole were not contrived and pre-ar-

ranged. And it might have been. What easier than for an impostor and his confederates to have managed the whole affair? The impostor might have agreed with his confederates, that they should be in waiting at a certain place with certain animals, and that, on receiving a certain message, they should surrender those animals. And thus might he have acquired for himself the reputation of a prophet, though there would have been nothing in the whole transaction but trick and collusion.

Let us consider, however, whether the supposition of trick and collusion can be, in any measure, sustained under the circumstances of the case. Had the owners of the ass been confederate with Christ, they must have been of the number of his followers or adherents. But then they would, almost necessarily, have been known to the disciples whom Jesus sent, and thus the whole deception would have been instantly exposed. For you are to observe, that, if any were to be convinced or persuaded by the prescience displayed, it must have been the disciples; no others, so far as we know, were acquainted with what we may call Christ's prediction. But no effect could have been wrought on the disciples, had not the owners of the ass been strangers to Jesus; and, if strangers, they could not have been leagued with him to effect a deceit.

Whilst, therefore, we readily allow that there was that in the things predicted and performed which might have given place for imposture, we contend that the circumstances exclude the supposition of imposture, and leave room for nothing but belief that Christ really prophesied, and that events proved his prophecy truth. And having satisfied ourselves that there could not have been deception or collusion, we may admire the prescience and power displayed, and derive from them fresh witness to the dignity of our Lord. We have pointed out to you how the prophecy descended into the minutest particulars, and it is this accuracy of detail which makes prophecy wonderful. A great occurrence may often be conjectured through human sagacity; a keen observer will mark the shadows thrown by coming events, and give notices of those events, which time shall accurately verify. But the difficulty is to go into trifles, to foreknow things

trifling in themselves, or their trifling accidents and accompaniments. I am really more struck at the foreknowledge of Christ, when sending his disciples for the ass and the colt, than when announcing the desolations which should come upon Jerusalem. Circumstanced as the Jews were in regard of the Romans, subjected to their empire but galled by the yoke, a far-sighted politician might have conjectured the arrival of the time when rebellion would make the eagle swoop down to the slaughter. But that an ass and her foal should be found, at a certain moment, on a certain spot—that the owners would allow them to be taken away on the utterance of certain words, which even a thief might have used—indeed, there may not be as much majesty in such a prophecy, as when the theme is a conqueror's march or an empire's fall, but I know not whether there be not more marvel, if you judge by the room given for a shrewd guess or a sagacious surmise.

There was miracle, moreover, as well as prophecy. I can count it nothing less than a miracle wrought upon mind, that men, in all probability poor men, were willing to give up their property at the bidding of strangers, and with no pledge for its return. You can hardly explain this but on the supposition of a superhuman influence; so that Christ, who had before showed his power over matter at a distance, by healing the centurion's son without going to his house, now showed his power over mind at a distance, by constraining men to act without bringing them to hear. Hence, we can declare the incident before us a singular exhibition of the power of prophecy and the power of miracle; an exhibition, moreover, as appropriate as it was striking. We can suppose that our Redeemer, knowing the bitter trials to which his disciples were about to be exposed, desired to give them some proof of his superhuman endowments, which might encourage them to rely on his protection when he should no longer be visibly amongst them. What shall be the proof? shall he control the tumultuous elements? shall he summon legions of angels? shall he shake Jerusalem with the earthquake? shall he divide the Jordan? Nay, it was not by any stupendous demonstration that the timid disciples were likely to be assured.

They rather required to be taught that the knowledge and power of their Master extended to mean and inconsiderable things; for hence they would learn, that though poor and despised, they should not be overlooked, but engage his protection and care. They wanted evidence that his presence was not needful in order to his guardianship, but that he could act on their enemies as well when at a distance as when near. And the more magnificent miracle might not have certified them on the points on which they thus needed assurance. But this was done by an exhibition of prescience in regard to an animal and of power over its owner. He who could be taking cognizance of the place of an ass and her foal, would not fail to observe the position of the poor fishermen, his followers; he who could influence those who saw him not to surrender their property, would put forth control over persecutors when he had returned to the heavens.

And therefore do we call upon you to admire the transaction under review, not only because it displayed superhuman knowledge and power, but displayed them in the manner best adapted to the circumstances of those for whose benefit it took place. Our blessed Savior repeated the kind of display, as though feeling its special suitableness to his disciples, when he indicated the place for eating the passover, by the meeting a man "bearing a pitcher of water." The ass and the colt might have been procured without all this labored and circuitous process. But Jesus, contemplating the fulfilment of an ancient prediction, would have it fulfilled through such means as should strengthen the faith of the dejected followers, who were soon to be separated from him. He might in a moment, by an act of creative power, have produced the creatures of which he stood in need. Or he might have summoned the chief priests and scribes, and constrained them, however much against their will, to provide for his triumphant, yet humiliating, entry. And in such methods there might have been more that was calculated to dazzle and amaze. But if the despised were to be taught that meanness could not hide from his notice, and the deserted that distance could not withdraw from his protection,

then, indeed, nothing could have been more appropriate than the transaction before us. It might have been a loftier bidding, Go ye to the wilderness and command hither the untamed thing which "scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver;" or, "Go ye to the Sanhedrim, and demand of the haughty assembly that they furnish my humble equipage, and so enable me to fulfil prophecies which shall witness against them;" but there was immeasurably more of regard for the wants of his disciples, more of tender consideration, more of gracious forethought, in the directions before us, "Go ye into the village: ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and say, The Lord hath need of them."

Now, up to this point we have examined the transaction with reference to our Savior, considering only the prescience and power displayed, together with the wisdom and goodness that may be traced in the mode of display. Let us now turn to the conduct of the disciples, and see whether there be not much to deserve our imitation.

It does not appear that there was any hesitation as to the obeying a command which might naturally have been heard with some measure of repugnance. The disciples were to go on what might have passed for a wild errand. Was it likely that they should find the ass and the colt just where Christ said? If they did, how were they to obtain possession? what was it but robbery to attempt to remove them without the knowledge of the owners? and if the owners should be standing by, what could be expected from them but insult and violence? what probability was there that they would be influenced by such words as Christ directed to be used? It can hardly be questioned that most of us would have been ready with these doubts and objections. We invent reasons enough for hesitating, or refusing to obey, when there is not half so much of plausible excuse for avoiding a prescribed path of duty. How difficult do we find it to take God at his word, to show our faith in a promise by fulfilling its condition! We will not go to the place where the two ways meet, on the simple assurance that we shall there find what we seek; we want some more

sensible evidence as to the animals being there, before we adventure on what may only disappoint. And if we are to be exposed to misconstruction or opprobrium, if the thing which we are called upon to do be likely to bring reproach, or give occasion for calumny, what a shrinking is there! what a reluctance! The positive command of Christ would hardly suffice, if it required what an ill-natured world might liken to robbery. Not that, in obeying the Divine law, we shall ever give just cause for opprobrious reflection: the command might be to take the ass and the foal, but God would provide that the taking them should not bring disgrace upon religion. But this it is for which we cannot trust him: we doubt whether there will be any such power in the words, "The Lord hath need of them," as will secure us from violence or malice? and therefore, we either decline the duty altogether, or enter on it with a hesitation, and want of faith, which may themselves produce the results of which we are in dread.

It was not thus with the first disciples; and we should do well to endeavor to imitate their obedience. It seems, with them, to have been enough that the duty was clear, as enjoined by a plain command of their Master; and immediately they "conferred not with flesh and blood," hearkened not to carnal suggestions, but acted as men who knew that compliance was their part, and the removal of difficulties God's. Thus should it be with us; we should have but one object, that of satisfying ourselves, from the prayerful study of Scripture, whether this action be right or that action wrong; when the decision is reached, there should be no hesitation in regard either of consequences or means; what God has made it incumbent on us to do, he will enable us to perform: what he requires us to give up, he will not suffer us to want. If he send us to the place where the two ways meet, it shall be only our faithlessness which can prevent our there finding what we seek; and if his bidding seem to expose us to the being called robbers, he will see his will so executed as to silence the adversary.

And then it is well worthy of remark that it looked like an ignoble errand on which the disciples were dispatched.

When sent to preach the Gospel in the cities of Judea, there was something illustrious in the commission; we can imagine them going forth, sustained in part by the lofty consciousness of being messengers from heaven, charged with tidings of unrivalled importance. But to be sent to a village in quest of an ass and her foal; what an indignity, it might almost have been said, for men on whom had been bestowed supernatural powers, who had been intrusted, not only with the preaching of the Gospel, but with the ability to work wonders in proof of its truth. Probably they were not aware of Christ's reasons for sending them on such an errand; it might have thrown a sort of splendor about the commission, had they known that ancient prophecy was to be thereby accomplished. But it was not until after his resurrection that Christ expounded unto his disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It may, therefore, have been that they whom he despatched, had no idea whatsoever of being instrumental to fulfilling a famous prediction, but went about the business in ignorance of all that might have redeemed it from apparent ignobleness. The opinion of many is, that the two disciples were Peter and John, men who had accompanied the Redeemer to Tabor, and witnessed the wondrous scene of his transfiguration. What a change was here! to have been selected, at one time, to go to meet Moses and Elias, emerging in glory from the invisible world; and at another, to go into a village, and find an ass and her foal for their Master. But it was for their Master, and this sufficed. It mattered nothing to them on what they were employed, provided only it was Christ by whom they were employed. That, they felt, could not be degrading which he commanded; nor that unimportant by which he might be served. Oh for something of the like spirit amongst ourselves—a readiness to fill the lower offices as well as the chief, a disposition to count it honor enough to be useful to Christ, in whatever capacity! How many are there who can be active and earnest in what is great and imposing, and take the lead in enterprises for the spread of the Gospel, who, nevertheless, have no taste for humbler duties, duties to be discharged in the

hovel of poverty, and at the bedside of sickness! This is willingness to be the disciple, whilst Judea has to be traversed, with all the insignia of an ambassador from God, and unwillingness, when the ass and the colt are to be fetched from the village. How many can hearken gladly to religion, whilst discourse turns only on lofty things, on communications with Deity, on manifestations of heaven, who yet feel impatience, and even disgust, when there is mention of a cross to be borne, and reproach to be braved. And what is this but readiness to follow Christ to the mount, when he is about to assume glorious apparel, and shine forth in the majesty which is essentially his own, but refusal to act in his service when he requires the mean animal, which is likely to procure him the scorn of the proud?

Indeed it is a prime truth, but one which we are all slow to learn, that there is no employment which is not ennobled through being employment for Christ, and that it is not genuine christianity which selects what it likes, and leaves what it dislikes. If we have the love of Christ in our hearts, it will be our dominant desire to promote his cause and perform his will; and though the dominance of this desire may not prevent our feeling that we should prefer one sphere of labor to another, or enter with greater alacrity on this course than on that, it will certainly produce readiness for every variety of duty, for fetching the colt on which Christ may ride, as well as for rearing the temple in which he may dwell. And we set before you the example of the Apostles in a particular, in which, possibly, it is often overlooked. We show you how, without the least hesitation, these holy men set themselves to the obeying a command, against which they might have offered very plausible objections, objections drawn not only from the little likelihood of success, but from the almost certain exposure to reproach and disgrace. We show you also how it was required of them to come down, so to speak, from their loftier occupation, and perform what might be called a menial service; and with what alacrity they complied; the very men to whom spirits were subject, and who had been ordained to wage God's war with the powers of darkness, being directed, and being wil-

ling, to go on an errand to which the meanest were equal. The disciples were never worthier of imitation than in this. Think of them when a duty is proposed to you from which you recoil, because there seems but little to encourage, and you must, moreover, be liable to opposition and calumny. Is it apparently a less hopeful thing which you have to take in hand, than the finding so many contingencies satisfied as were to meet, if the two disciples succeeded? the animals of the right kind, standing at a certain place, and at a certain time, the owners consenting to their removal without receiving price or security. And can the doing what is bidden expose you to more of opposition and calumny than seemed to threaten the disciples, who were to take the property of others, and thus run the risk of being regarded and treated as robbers? Think, moreover, of these disciples when you either long for more honored employment than has been allotted you by God, or are tempted to decline any duty as beneath you, and fitted only for such as are inferior in office. They were probably, among the mightiest of Apostles who went into a village to loosen, and lead away an ass and her foal, at the bidding of Christ. Ah, it were easy to exhibit the disciples under a more imposing point of view, and you might feel it a stirring thing to be bidden to imitate these first preachers of christianity, as they throw themselves into combat with the idolatries of the world. But the hard thing is to obey Christ on the simple warrant of his word, without objecting the difficulties or computing the consequences. The hard thing is, to be willing to be as nothing, so long as you may be useful in the church; to be content with the lowest place in the household of the Lord, yea, to think it honor to be vile, if it be indeed in Christ's cause. And wishing to urge you, by the example of Apostles, to what is hardest in duty, we do not array these men before you in their lofty enterprise of enlightening ignorance, and overthrowing superstition; we remind you who they were, how commissioned, how endowed, and how exalted; and then we bid you ponder their instant obedience to the command, "Go into the village; straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them and bring them unto me."

But if there were much worthy of being admired and imitated in the conduct of the disciples, what are we to say to that of the owners of the ass and the colt? It were beside our purpose to inquire into the circumstances or character of these men. Indeed we have no material for such an inquiry, as we are not told whether they had any knowledge of Christ, and can therefore but conjecture their treatment of his pretensions. Thus much, however, is certain—they opposed the removal of their property, but immediately withdrew their opposition, on hearing the words, "The Lord hath need of them." It may be doubted whether they understood the disciples as referring to Christ under the name of "the Lord," or whether they applied the name to God; for the disciples were not instructed to say, "Our Lord hath need of them"—which would have fixed the message to Christ—but "The Lord," a form of expression which is used absolutely of Deity, as well as of the Mediator. It is not improbable, therefore, that the owners considered that their property was demanded from them in the name of the Almighty, and that, secretly influenced to regard the demand as having actually proceeded from God, they immediately and unhesitatingly complied. At all events, if it were to Christ that they made the surrender, they made it to him under the title of "the Lord"—thus recognizing a right superior to their own, and confessing in him that authority which belongs only to God. So that, in whatever measure these men may have been acquainted with Christ, they clearly acted on the principle of their being stewards rather than proprietors, holding possessions at the will of the Almighty, and prepared to give them up so soon as he should ask them. It was enough for them to receive an intimation that God had employment for that which he had deposited with them, and instantly they surrendered it, as though no longer their own.

Were they not herein a great example to ourselves? Every one of us is ready to acknowledge in God the universal proprietor, to confess, at least with the mouth, that every good, which is delivered into our keeping, "cometh down from the Father of lights." The infidelity on such points is almost exclu-

sively a practical infidelity; there may be some, but they are few, so blinded by sensuality, or besotted with pride, that they will boldly ascribe to their own skill what they acquire, and speak and think as though there were no ruler above who both has bestowed and may reclaim every tittle of their possessions. It is virtually little more than acknowledging the existence of God, to acknowledge that the universe, in its every department, is subject to the control and disposal of its Maker; that he orders, with absolute authority, the portion of every creature, diminishing or augmenting it, making it permanent or variable, at his own good pleasure. And if the acknowledgment were any thing more than in theory, it would follow that men, conscious of holding their property in trust, would strive to employ it in the service of the actual owner, and be ready to part with it, on his indicating the least wish for its removal. But here, alas, it is that the infidelity comes into action; and men, who are most frank with the confession of not being their own, and of holding nothing which belongs not to another, will be as tenacious of possessions as though there were no superior title; as reluctant to give up any portion, even when God himself asks, as though stewardship implied no accountability.

The owners of the ass and the colt proceeded on the right principle, and should therefore be taken as examples by ourselves. They used the animals for their own pleasure or profit, so long as they were not required by God, but surrendered them without a moment's hesitation, so soon as they heard "The Lord hath need of them." And this should be the case with every one on whom God has bestowed earthly wealth. There is nothing to forbid the temperate enjoyment of that wealth—but it is held only in trust; and a due portion should be cheerfully given up, whensoever there is a clear intimation of its being needed by the Lord. Ancient prophecy was to be accomplished. The Redeemer had to make his way into Jerusalem, as the King of Zion, "meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Here was the need: and he, whose are "the cattle on a thousand hills," and who could have commanded the attendance of swarming troops of the beasts of

the field, chose to send to men who had but scanty possessions; and these men, admitting at once his rights, gladly surrendered what they owned at his bidding. Ancient prophecy has yet to be accomplished: the Redeemer has to make his way into districts of the earth which have not bowed at his sceptre, into households and hearts which have closed themselves against him. And though he might command the legions of angels, and cause a miraculous proclamation of his Gospel, it pleases him to work through human instrumentality—not indeed that the instrumentality can be effectual, except through his blessing, but that it is not his course to produce results, save through the use of instituted means. Here then is the need; and it may justly be said, that through every statement of spiritual destitution, every account how souls are perishing through "lack of knowledge," and how the kingdom of darkness is opposing itself to the kingdom of light, there comes a message to the owners of riches, "The Lord hath need of them."

But who will say that the message ordinarily finds that ready compliance which followed it when delivered by the first disciples of Christ? Indeed, it will be the commencement of a new era in the church, when to show that "the Lord hath need" of this or that thing, shall suffice to procure its cheerful bestowment. Yet assuredly this is the just ground on which to rest every charitable appeal: let it be an appeal in the cause of God and of Christ, and it is not so much a request for liberality as a demand for justice. The Almighty does but ask his own: you may sin in withholding, but can claim no merit for surrendering. Neither is it exclusively as pointing out the tenure by which we hold our possessions, that there is a lesson in Christ's message to the owners of the ass and the colt. It is a message which should be heard through every afflictive dispensation; for in one way or another, it may be said that the Lord has need of whatsoever he withdraws from our keeping. If he strip us of property, it may be that we had not made a right use of that property; and having need of it, he has transferred it to another who will be more faithful in his stewardship. Or, if we be not chargeable with the abuse of our trust, we may be sure that God has

taken the earthly riches, in order to attach us more closely to heavenly; and he may be said to have needed what he took, if he took it that he might carry on his great work of moral discipline.

It is thus also with the removal of what we love and miss more than riches—kinsmen, and children, and friends: "The Lord hath need of them." Perhaps they may have been fully prepared for the glories of heaven: there were places in the celestial temple which awaited them as occupants; and God, with reverence be it spoken, could no longer spare them from his presence. Oh, there is many a death-bed, over which angels might be thought to whisper the words now before us; and if they who stand round the bed should be tempted to ask, "Why is one so excellent to be taken? why are we to be parted from so rare an example of all that is most precious and beautiful in religion?" the best answer might be, "The Lord hath need of him:" the light which has shone so brilliantly below, is now wanted to add to the radiance above. And even if we may not venture on such a statement as this, we may still say that the dead are taken, that the living may be warned: God breaks our earthly ties, to lead us to the commencing or strengthening friendship with himself; and there can be nothing strained or exaggerated in the saying that "the Lord hath need" of that which he removes, that he may correct and benefit his creatures.

In how many ways then, and through how many voices, is the message syllabled, which Christ sent to them whose property he required. Harken for it, and it will come to you through all the wants of your fellow-men, through the prevalence of ignorance, through the pressure of indigence, through the accidents, sorrows, and bereavements of life. In a thousand ways is God saying to us that he has need of our property, need of our talents, need of our time, need of those whom we love, and of that which we cherish. Shall we refuse him? or, where we have no option, shall we yield up grudgingly, in place of cheerfully, what he requires? Nay, let us take pattern from men to whom probably but little had been intrusted, but who readily gave up that little so soon as it was needed for the service of God. It may be, that we are often inclined to

excuse ourselves from imitating scriptural examples, by pleading that the saints of old were of extraordinary character, and in extraordinary circumstances, and cannot therefore with justice be set before us as models. If I hold up the patriarch Job to those on whom sorrow presses hard, and bid them observe how, when children were dead, and possessions destroyed, this man of God meekly said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord"—Yes, is the feeling, if not the answer; but Job was no common man: his name has passed into a proverb: and it is not to be expected that such as we should emulate his marvellous patience. If again, when I would urge men to sacrifices and endurances in the cause of Christ and his Gospel, I dwell on the example of St. Paul, who counted "all things but loss," that he might know and serve the Redeemer, "in journeyings often, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness"—Yes, is the sentiment, if not the expression; but St. Paul has never had his equal: the wonder of his own and every succeeding generation, we may not think to reach so lofty a standard.

Thus there is a way of evading the force of scriptural examples: men imagine circumstances of distinction between themselves and eminent saints, and give those circumstances in apology for coming far behind them in piety. Let us then learn from the mean and unknown, of whom we may not plead that they were separated from us by any thing rare in endowment or position. Men who are reluctant to part with property, that it may be employed in the cause of God; parents who would withhold their children from missionary work, or murmur at their being transplanted from earth to heaven; sufferers, to whom is allotted one kind or another of afflictive dispensation, and who rebel under the chastisement, as though it were not for good—come ye all, and learn, if not from exalted persons such as Job and St. Paul, yet from the owners of the ass and the colt which Christ sent for, when designing his last entry to Jerusalem. There is virtually the same message to every one of you as was brought to these poor and unknown individuals. The motive to your surrendering what is asked, or

bearing what is imposed, is precisely the same as was urged upon them. And they will rise up in the judgment and condemn you, if with all your superior advantages—the advantages of christianity above judaism, of an imperfect over an introductory dispensation—you show yourselves less compliant than they were with a summons from the universal Proprietor. Christ, who knoweth the heart, could reckon on readiness, so soon as the owners should be told of his requiring the ass and the colt. May he reckon on the same with us? Ah, let us, when we go hence, consider what we have which God may speedily require at our hands; let us search, and see whether we are prepared to resign it, when asked for by God—be it wealth, or child, or honor, or friend—and let us observe how reluctance is rebuked now, and will be witnessed against hereafter, by the willingness of the owners of the ass and the colt, of whom Christ could affirm, “Say ye, the Lord hath need of them, and straightway they will send them.”

We have thus considered the incidents to which our text has respect with reference to Christ himself, to his disciples, and to the owners of the ass and the colt. We have endeavored to show you that our Lord added to the witness for his being the Messiah, by the prescience and power displayed; and that the manner of the display was admirably appropriate to the wants and circumstances of his followers. We have set before you the disciples as worthy of your close imitation, in that they unhesitatingly obeyed where they might have plausibly objected, and were as ready for a menial service as for the most honored and illustrious. And then the owners have been considered, as exemplifying a great principle of which we are apt to lose sight—the principle, that, in the matter of our possessions, we are not proprietors, but stewards, and should therefore hold ourselves ready to part with what we have, so soon as we know that it is needed by the Lord.

They are great lessons, and striking truths, which have thus been derived and illustrated from our text and the context. But, before we conclude, let us dwell for a moment on the vast honor given to humble individuals, in that they were allowed to contribute to the progress of the Savior, when, accomplishing

ancient prediction, he advanced towards the city where he was to sacrifice himself. I think, that, if the men saw the triumphal procession, the multitude spreading their garments, strewing the way with branches, and burdening the air with hosannahs, they must have felt an elation of heart, that their beasts should have been chosen for a personage whom thousands thus combined to reverence and honor. The noblest and wealthiest might justly have exulted, had they been allowed to aid the glorious advance: but, as though to show how the mean may serve him, and how their service shall be owned, Christ openly used the property of the poor, on the single occasion when there was any thing like pomp in his earthly career.

And why should we not gather from this, that, when he shall come in power and great majesty—not the lowly man, entering Jerusalem in a triumph which was itself almost humiliation, but the “King of kings, and Lord of lords”—he will acknowledge and exhibit the services rendered him by the poor and despised, as well as those wrought by the great ones of the earth? It ought to encourage them who have but little in their power, that it was “the foal of an ass” on which Christ rode, and that this foal, in all probability, belonged to the poor. We may all do something towards that sublime consummation for which the church watches and prays, when, not from a solitary city, and not from a single and inconsistent people, but from ten thousand times ten thousand voices, from every clime, and land, and tongue, shall be heard the shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosannah in the highest.” “The Lord hath need” of the strength of the mighty and of the feebleness of the weak; of the abundance of the rich and of the mites of the impoverished; and if we will go forth to his help, if each, according to his means and ability, will strive to accelerate the day when “all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest,” we may be sure that our labor shall not be forgotten, when “the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” Oh, if there be some of whom it shall then be told that they contributed the rich and the costly towards preparing the way

for the advancing Redeemer, of others it may be said that they had not the rich and the costly to give, but that, with a willing heart, they offered their best, though that best was only the refuse and mean. And we do not merely say that the pooriness of the gift shall not cause it to be overlooked: the inconsiderable offering may be shown to have been as instrumental as the magnificent in furthering the progress of the Gospel: he who, when he would accomplish prophecy, entered Jerusalem, not in the rich man's chariot, but on the poor man's ass, may prove that he went forwards to his kingdom, as much through what the feeble wrought in their weakness, as what the mighty effected in their strength.

Let this encourage all, that they be not weary in well-doing. May all make a practical use of the great doctrine of Christ's second coming. Anticipate that coming: realize your own personal

share in that coming. He will come "to take account of his servants"—are you ready with your account? have you improved your talents? have you acted up to your ability in furthering the great cause of truth upon earth? Let none think himself either excused or injured by insignificance. There was, you remember, a servant to whom but one talent had been given; and he was bound hand and foot and cast to "outer darkness," because that one had been hidden, when it might have been put "to the exchangers." There were men who perhaps owned little more than an ass and a colt, but they were ready to surrender what they had, when needed by Christ; and lo, they were honored to the effecting what prophecy had announced in one of its loftiest strains, they were instrumental to the bringing and displaying her King to "the daughter of Zion."

S E R M O N X I I I .

NEHEMIAH BEFORE ARTAXERXES.

* I said unto the king, Let the king live for ever. why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.—NEHEMIAH II. 3, 4, 5.

When the seventy years had expired, during which God, in just judgment for their many offences, had sentenced the Jews to captivity in Babylon, he graciously remembered his promise, and raised them up a deliverer in the person of Cyrus. In the first year of that monarch's reign, "that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished," a royal edict was issued, which not only permitted

the captives to return to their own land, but enjoined that every facility should be afforded to their march, and every assistance rendered them in the rebuilding their city and temple.

It does not appear that immediate and general advantage was taken of this edict; the Jews did not raise as one man, under the influence of a desire to resettle themselves in Palestine. And this is little to be wondered at, if you re-

member the utter desolation in which Jerusalem and Judea then lay, the arduousness and perils of the journey, and the fact that the captivity had continued so long that few, and those only men fast advancing in years, had ever seen the land of their fathers, or were bound to it by the ties of remembrance or acquaintance. No marvel if there was something of pause and hesitation, if piety and patriotism did not instantly nerve all the exiles to abandon the country which had almost become theirs by adoption, and to seek a home where, though they had once been possessors, they would only find themselves strangers. But God purposed the restoration of the people, and therefore, as we read, he raised the spirit of "the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem." And soon, under the guidance of Zerubbabel, there went forth a mixed company of the old and the young, bearing with them not only their own riches, but "the vessels of the house of the Lord:" obstacles were surmounted, dangers escaped, through the assistance and protection of God; and in due time the wanderers reached the spot, hallowed by so many magnificent recollections, and which was yet to be the scene of mightier things than past days had witnessed.

But the difficulties, as you well remember, of the Jews did not terminate with their arrival in Judea; their city and temple were to be rebuilt; and in this great work, they found inveterate adversaries in the Samaritans, who had been settled in the land by Esarhaddon, and who, professing a mixed and spurious religion, wished not the revival of the pure worship of Jehovah. The opposition of these adversaries was so far successful, that Cyrus, the patron of the Jews, being dead, "the work of the house of God" was made to cease "until the second year of the reign of Darius." Then, however, it recommenced, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the people, and God inclined the new monarch to re-enact the decree which had been issued by Cyrus. Under these altered circumstances, Jerusalem had soon again a temple, which, if inferior to that of Solomon in stateliness of structure, and richness of adorn-

ment, was yet prophetically declared destined to far higher dignity, inasmuch as it should receive the promised Messiah: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."

But when the temple had thus risen, and the inspired men were dead whom God had raised up for the instruction and encouragement of the people, there appears to have been great unsettlement in both the civil and ecclesiastical policy of the Jews; as a nation, their position was made precarious by surrounding enemies and internal confusion; whilst, as the people of God, they had mingled themselves with the people of the lands, and thereby exposed themselves to his wrath. In this crisis, Ezra was raised up, "A ready scribe in the law of Moses:" having obtained sanction and assistance from king Artaxerxes, he visited Jerusalem that he might "teach in Israel statutes and judgments." It would seem to have been almost exclusively to religious matters that Ezra directed his attention; he accomplished a great work in dissolving the unlawful connexions which the Jews had formed with the people of the land; but he did little or nothing towards reinstating his country in the position which it had once held amongst nations. Jerusalem appears to have remained without defences, exposed to the assault of every enemy, and liable at any moment—so ill was it provided with the munitions of war—to be reduced to the ruins from which it had so lately, and as yet so imperfectly, sprung.

Here we come to the actions of another worthy, whose history furnishes the latest canonical records of the Jews till the days of our Lord. When about twelve years had elapsed from the events commemorated in the close of the book of Ezra, we find a Jew, named Nehemiah, residing in Shushan, the capital of Persia, and filling the office of cup-bearer to Artaxerxes the king. His father, Hachaliah was probably one of them who had declined to take advantage of the decree of Cyrus, preferring to remain where he had made himself a home, or returning to a country where he must feel himself an alien. The son, Nehemiah, occupying a post of great

honor in the Persian court, may never have had an opportunity of visiting Jerusalem, but his heart yearned towards the land and city of his fathers; with the spirit of a true patriot, he sought eagerly for information as to the condition of his countrymen, and longed to be instrumental in advancing their prosperity. The information came: Hanani, one of his brethren, and certain men of Judah, reached Shushan from Jerusalem, perhaps disheartened by the difficulties which they had experienced, and accounting it better to resettle in the land in which they had been captives. They gave Nehemiah a melancholy, though not, as it would seem, an exaggerated account. "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."

And now it was that the man of piety appeared in the man of patriotism; and admirably does Nehemiah stand forth as an example to them who profess to have at heart their country's good, and to be stricken by its calamities. He did not immediately call a meeting of the Jews, to consult what might be done for their afflicted countrymen. He did not gather round him a knot of politicians, that plans might be discussed, and assistance levied. But, as one who knew in calamity the offspring of sin, and in the Almighty the single patron of the distressed, Nehemiah "sat down, and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."

But Nehemiah did not count his part done when he had thus, in all humility, confessed the sins of his nation, and entreated the interference of God. He was not one of them who substitute prayer for endeavor, though he would not make an endeavor until he had prepared himself by prayer. Fortified through humiliation and supplication, he now sought to take advantage of his position with the king, and, true patriot as he was, to render that position useful to his countrymen. Nearly four months elapsed from his interview with Hanani, before an opportunity occurred for his addressing Artaxerxes. There was probably a rotation in the office of cup-bearer, which obliged him to await his

turn; and it was at the hazard of life to any one to enter, unbidden, into the presence of the Persian monarch. But in the month of Nisan he stood before Artaxerxes, and he "took up the wine, and gave it unto the king." He was now, however, heavy at heart, and the handing the sparkling draught to the monarch at his banquet, ill assorted with a mind distracted and sad. He had not the skill, indeed he could not have had the wish, to disguise his feelings, and affect a cheerfulness which he did not experience. It was his object to attract the attention of the king; to do this he had only to allow his countenance to betray what, perhaps, he could hardly have forced it to conceal—for we are expressly told that he had never "beforetime been sad in his presence"—so that the altered demeanor was immediately observed, and its reason demanded with all the quickness of eastern suspicion.

And here it is that we reach the very simple, but touching, narration of our text. Nehemiah was sore afraid, when Artaxerxes, struck with the sorrow depicted on his features, imperiously asked the cause of the too evident grief. It was the moment for which he had wished, yea, for which he had prayed, yet, now that it had come, he felt so deeply what consequences hung upon a word, that he was almost unmanned, and could scarce venture to unburden his heart. He spake, however, and first offering the customary wish on behalf of the king, asked how he could be other than sad, whilst the city, and the place of the sepulchres of his fathers, lay desolate and waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire? Upon this, Artaxerxes demanded what request he had to make; and Nehemiah, though his answer had of course to be immediately given, gave it not till he had strengthened himself by silent petition to one greater than the king; he "prayed to the God of heaven," and then entreated permission to go unto Judah, and build up the city of the sepulchres of his fathers.

The request was successful, though the passage, which we have selected as our subject of discourse, does not require us to refer to subsequent events in the history of Nehemiah. There is enough in this passage itself to require

and repay the most serious attention ; and we have but engaged you with a somewhat lengthened review of foregoing circumstances, that you might the better appreciate what is here recorded of the conduct of Nehemiah. The two prominent facts on which we wish to seize, do indeed widely differ the one from the other, so that, in making them the subject of a single discourse, we cannot hope to preserve that continuousness of thought which is generally to be desired in addresses from the pulpit. But forasmuch as the facts come together in Scripture, it must be every way right that they be gathered, as we now propose, into one and the same sermon. The facts are these ; the first, that it was as the city of his fathers' sepulchres that Jerusalem excited the solicitude of Nehemiah ; the second, that Nehemiah found a moment before answering the king, to offer petition to the Almighty. Let us have your close attention to these very interesting, though unconnected topics ; our first topic is, the peculiar plea which Nehemiah urges with Artaxerxes ; our second, the ejaculatory prayer which went up from Nehemiah to God.

Now Jerusalem had not yet received its most illustrious distinction, forasmuch as "the fulness of time" had not arrived, and, therefore, there had not yet been transacted within her circuits the wondrous scenes of the redemption of the world. She was reserved for more stupendous and startling things than past days had witnessed, fraught though her history had been with miracles and prodigy : her streets were to be trodden by the incarnate God, and on the summit of Moriah was the promised seed of the woman, bruised himself in the heel, to accomplish the first prophecy, and bruise the serpent's head. Nevertheless, to every man, especially to a devout Jew, there were already reasons in abundance why thought should turn to Jerusalem, and centre there as on a place of peculiar sanctity and interest. There, had a temple been reared, "magnificent" beyond what earth beforetime had seen, rich with the marble and the gold, but richer in the visible tokens of the presence of the universal Lord. There had sacrifices been continually offered, whose efficacy was manifest even to them who discerned

not their typical import, forasmuch as at times they prevailed to the arrest of temporal visitations, and pestilence was dispersed by the smoke of the oblation. There, had monarchs reigned of singular and wide-spread renown ; the fame of one, at least, had gone out to the ends of the earth, and nations had flocked to hear the wisdom which fell from his lips. There, had been enacted a long series of judgments and deliverances ; the chastisements of heaven following so visibly upon wickedness, and its protection on repentance, that the most casual beholder might have certified himself that the Supreme Being held the reins of government, and was carrying out the laws of a rigid retribution.

Hence, it might easily have been accounted for why Nehemiah should have looked with thrilling interest to Jerusalem, even if you had kept out of sight his close connexion with those who were striving to reinstate it in strength, and had not supposed any travelling onwards of his mind to the wonders with which prophecy yet peopled its walls. But the observable thing is, that Nehemiah fixes not on any of these obvious reasons, when he would explain, or account for, his interest in Jerusalem. He describes the city ; but he describes it only as "the place of his fathers' sepulchres : " and this he insists upon, as of itself sufficient to justify his urgency, pleading it alike when he would explain why his countenance was sad, and when he stated to the king the favor which he sought at his hands. Before he offered his silent prayer to God, and afterwards, when he might be supposed to have received fresh wisdom from above, he spake, you observe, of the city merely as of the place of the sepulchres of his fathers, as though no stronger reason could be given why he should wish to rebuild it ; none, at least, whose force was more felt by himself, or more likely to be confessed by the king. The language of Nehemiah is too express and too personal, to allow of our supposing that he adopted it merely from thinking that it would prevail with Artaxerxes : if there were truthfulness in this worthy, it was the desecration of his fathers' sepulchres which chiefly disquieted him ; it was the wish of restoring these sepulchres which mainly urged to his visiting Jerusalem. Ponder these facts for a few

moments; they are full, we think, of beauty and interest.

If we may argue from the expressions of Nehemiah, then, it is a melancholy sight—that of a ruined town, a shattered navy, or a country laid waste by famine and war; but there is a more melancholy sight still, that of a churchyard, where sleeps the dust of our kindred, desecrated and destroyed, whether by violence or neglect. You know, that if poetry or fiction would place its hero in a position to draw upon himself the pity and sympathy of the reader, there is nothing in which it more delights than in the bringing him, after long wanderings as an exile, to the scenes where his childhood was passed, and making him there find the home of his ancestry deserted and ruined. And as the lonely man makes painfully his way through the scene of desolation, the wild winds syllabing, as it would seem, the names of other days, there is felt to be a depth and sacredness in his misfortunes, which must insure his being the object of a more than common compassion.

But, according to Nehemiah, there is another position which is yet more deserving of sympathy. Let us suppose a man to have paid the last sad offices to parents whom he justly revered; he has laid them in a decent grave, and, with filial piety, erected a simple monument over their remains. And then he has gone to distant lands, and worn away many years in separation from all kinsmen, though not without frequent turnings of the heart to the home of young days. At length he revisits his native shore, and finds, as in such cases is commonly found, that of the many friends whom he had left, scarcely one remains to welcome him back. Disappointed at not being known by the living, he seeks the companionship of the dead; he hastens to the village churchyard where his parents sleep; they will speak to him from the grave, and he shall no longer seem lonely. But he can hardly find the grave; the monuments are levelled; with difficulty can he assure himself that the tombs themselves have not been profaned, and the bones of the dead sacrilegiously disturbed. Oh, will not this be the most heartbreaking thing of all? There is something so ungenerous in forgetfulness or contempt of the dead—they cannot speak for themselves;

they so seem, in dying, to bequeath their dust to survivors, as though they would give affection something to cherish, and some kind office still to perform; that, from graves wantonly neglected or invaded, there might always appear to issue the pathetic complaint, "We have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against us."

And we cannot but think that the feelings of the man whom we have thus carried, not to the ruined mansion, but to the ruined mausoleum of his ancestry, would be a full explanation why Nehemiah laid such emphasis on the fact which he selected, when he sought to move Artaxerxes; why he omitted all reference to Jerusalem in its magnificence, to the thrones of monarchs, the schools of prophets, the altars of sacrifice; and simply said, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

We do not, however, suppose that the strong marks of respect for the dead, which occur so frequently in the Bible, are to be thoroughly accounted for by the workings of human feelings and affections. We must have recourse to the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body, if we would fully understand why the dying Joseph "gave commandment concerning his bones," and Nehemiah offered no description of Jerusalem, but that it was the place of the sepulchres of his fathers. And there is no need here for entering into any inquiry as to the degree of acquaintance with the doctrine of the resurrection which was possessed under the old dispensation. If you find language used which cannot be adequately interpreted but by supposing a knowledge of the body's resurrection, it must rather become us to infer that men were then informed of his truth, than to conclude, on any other grounds, that it was altogether hidden.

But when you bring into the account the doctrine of the resurrection, it is no longer merely as a man of strong natural feelings, but as an ardent believer in the loftiest truths, that the supposed visiter to the desecrated churchyard might be confounded and overcome. The doctrine of the resurrection throws, as you must all admit, a sacredness round the remains of the dead, because it proves,

that, though we have committed the body to the ground, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," that body is reserved for noble allotments, destined to reappear in a loftier scene, and discharge more glorious functions. It were a light spirit which should not be overawed amid the ruins of a temple, who should recognize nothing solemn in the mouldering piles which it knew to have once canopied the more immediate presence of God; especially if it further knew, that, on some approaching day, the ruins would be reinstated in symmetry and strength, forming again a structure whose walls should be instinct with Deity, and from whose recesses, as from awful shrines, should issue the voice of the Eternal. The dead body is that fallen temple: consecrated upon earth as the habitation of the Holy Ghost, it decays only that it may be more gloriously rebuilt, and that God may dwell in it for ever above. Therefore is it no slight impiety to show contempt or neglect of the dead. It is contempt or neglect of a sanctuary; and how can this be shown but with contempt or neglect of the Being to whom it is devoted?

And there is yet more to be said; the doctrine of the resurrection is the crowning doctrine of revelation; Christ was "raised again for our justification:" "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." He, therefore, who would forget, make light of, or deny the doctrine of the resurrection, sets himself against no solitary article of the faith; it is christianity in its integrity which is at stake; it is all that is comforting, all that is saving in its tenets, which is displaced or disputed. He, on the other hand, who is earnest in defence of the doctrine of the resurrection, and eager to show that he values it as well as believes, does not, therefore, confine himself to a single truth of our holy religion: the sufficiency of the atonement, the completeness of redemption, the pardon of every sin, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, these he sees written, as they nowhere else are, in that general emptying of the sepulchres which he is taught to anticipate—these are preached to him most convincingly by the trumpet of the arch-

angel, whose peal already falls on the watchful ear of faith. Then the well-kept churchyard, with its various monuments, each inscribed with lines not more laudatory of the past than hopeful of the future, what is it but the public testimony to all that is precious in christianity, forasmuch as it is the public testimony that the dead shall live again? Whereas, if tablets be defaced, graves desecrated, and the solemn enclosure surrendered to insult and neglect, it is not merely that the dead are dishonored, and that violence is thus done to the best feelings of our nature; it is that great slight is thrown on all which, as immortal beings, we are most bound to hold dear, a great acknowledgment apparently withdrawn of truths without which "we are of all men most miserable." It is easy and specious to enlarge on the folly of paying honor to the prey of the worm, conveying with so much parade to the grave that which is turning into a mass of corruption, and then, perhaps, erecting a stately cenotaph to perpetuate the name of a certain portion of dust. And satire may readily point bitter and caustic lines, as the corpse of the owner of princely estates is borne along to the ancient mausoleum, in all the gloomy magnificence which distinguishes the obsequies of the great; and ask with a sort of cutting severity, whether it be not almost like upbraiding the dead, to pour this stern gorgeousness round the most humbling of earthly transactions? But we have no sympathy whatsoever with this common feeling, that there should be nothing of solemn pomp in consigning the human body to the grave. We might have, if we know nothing of a resurrection. But not whilst we believe in the general Easter of this creation. Not whilst we believe that the grave is but a temporary habitation, and that what is "sown a natural body" is to be "raised a spiritual." The funeral procession attests, and does homage to, the doctrine of the resurrection. It is not in honor of the body as mouldering into dust that we would have decent rites, or even, where consistent with rank, a sumptuous ceremonial attending its interment; but in honor of the body as destined to come forth gloriously and indissolubly reconstructed. We have no affection for the proud monument, if it were only to mark where the foul

worm has banqueted; but we look with pleasure on the towering marble, as indicating a spot where "the trump of God" shall cause a sudden and mysterious stir, and Christ win a triumph as "the Resurrection and the life."

Then suppose Nehemiah acquainted, as we are, with the doctrine of the resurrection, and we do but find in the emphasis laid upon the fact, that Jerusalem was the place of his fathers' sepulchres, the testimony of his belief in the truths of redemption, and of his desire to make and keep those truths known to the world. "I cannot bear," he seems to say, "that my fathers, who once witnessed from their graves to the most illustrious of facts, should be silent in the dust. I long to give again a thrilling voice to their remains; I would people their cemeteries with heralds of futurity. I may well be downcast when I think of their monuments as levelled with the earth; not because I ostentatiously desire that proud marbles may certify the greatness of my parentage, but because I would fain that men should thence draw evidence of general judgment and eternal life. I mourn not so much that Jerusalem has ceased to be a queen among cities; I long not so much that she should rise from her ashes, to be again imperial in beauty: I mourn that her desecrated graves speak no longer of a resurrection: I long that, through respect for the dead, she may be again God's witness of the coming immortality. Oh, why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste? If thy servant have found favor in thy sight, O king, send me unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it."

Now it is a wholly different, but not a less interesting subject, to which we have to give the remainder of our discourse. We are now to detach our minds from Nehemiah pleading for his fathers' sepulchres, and fix them upon Nehemiah addressing himself to God in ejaculatory prayer. It is among the most remarkable statements of the Bible, "So I prayed to the God of heaven," coming, as it does, between the question of the king, "For what dost thou make request?" and the answer of Nehemiah, "That thou wouldest send me unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres." There is no interval of time: Nehemiah has

had no opportunity of retiring, that he might present supplications to God. He has not knelt down—he has given no outward sign, unless perhaps a momentary uplifting of the eye, of holding communion with an invisible being; and nevertheless, there, in the midst of that thronged and brilliant court, and in the seconds that might elapse between a question and its answer, he has prayed unto God for direction and strength, and received, as we may believe, assistance from heaven. No one can well doubt what it was for which Nehemiah prayed: it may justly be supposed to have been, that God would aid him in preferring his request, and dispose Artaxerxes to grant it. And when you observe that the request appears to have been at once successful—for it pleased the king to send Nehemiah, and to grant him royal letters, which might facilitate the repairs of Jerusalem—you must allow that prayer was not only offered, but answered, in the moment which seemed too brief for all but a thought.

Under how practical and comforting a point of view does this place the truth of the omnipresence of God. It is a high mystery, one which quickly bewilders the understanding, and wearies even the imagination, that of God being every where present, incapable, from his nature, of leaving this place and passing to that, but always and equally occupying every spot in immensity, so as never to be nearer to us, and never further from us, continually at our side, and yet continually at the side of every other being in the measureless universe. Yet, with all its mysteriousness, this is no merely sublime but barren speculation, no subject to exercise the mind rather than benefit the heart. It should minister wondrously to our comfort, to know that, whether we can explain it or not, we are always, so to speak, in contact with God; so that in the crowd and in the solitude, in the retirement of the closet, the bustle of business, and the privacies of home, by day and by night, he is alike close at hand, near enough for every whisper, and plenteous enough for every want. It is not so with a human patron or friend, who, whatever be his power, and his desire to use it on our behalf, cannot always be with us, to observe each necessity, and appoint each supply.

We have to seek out this friend or patron, when we require his help: probably he is distant from us when the most needed; and we have to send a message, which brings no reply till the season have passed when it might be of avail. How different with God! in less time than I can count, the desire of my heart may be transmitted to this invisible Guardian and Guide, find gracious audience, and bring down upon me the blessing which I need.

If there be opportunity, then truly it may become me to seek audience with greater and more palpable solemnity, prostrating myself reverently before him, as the all-glorious King, and giving devout expression to my wishes and wants. But it is not indispensable to the audience, that there should be this outward prostration, and this set supplication. The heart has but to breathe its desire, and God is acquainted with it so soon as formed, and may grant it, if he will, before the tongue could have given it utterance. O that there were in us more of that habit of prayer, which, as with Nehemiah, would not suffer us to make request to man, without first sending up a silent petition to God. When Scripture speaks of praying "without ceasing," and of "continuing instant in prayer," it is generally thought to prescribe what cannot be actually done, at least not by them who are necessarily much occupied with temporal concerns. And if there were no prayer but those most solemn and stated acts, when, whether in private, or in the public assembly, we set ourselves specifically to the spreading our wants before our Father in heaven, these expressions of Holy Writ would have to be interpreted with certain restrictions, or would belong in their fulness to such only as might abstract themselves altogether from the world. But forasmuch as God is always so ready and able to hear that ejaculatory prayer, the sudden utterance of the heart, when there is no place for the bending of the knee, and no time even for the motion of the lip, may obtain instant audience and answer, what is to prevent there being that devotional habit which shall fulfil the injunction of praying "without ceasing," even though, as with numbers of our race, there be but few moments in the day which, snatched from necessary

toil, can be professedly consecrated to communion with heaven?

You have heard of, and are acquainted with, public prayer, and private prayer, and family prayer: but the prayer of which we now speak, ejaculatory prayer, differs from all these. As the name denotes, the heart should be as a bow, kept always strung, ready at any moment to launch prayer as an arrow; a dart which, if small, may yet go faster and further than the weightier implement of more labored attempt. The man of business, he need not enter on a single undertaking without prayer: the mariner, he need not unfurl a sail without prayer; the traveller, he need not face a danger without prayer; the statesmen, he need not engage in a debate without prayer; the invalid, he need not try a remedy without prayer; the accused, he need not meet an accuser without prayer. Is it that all and each of these must make a clear scene, ask time for retirement, and be left for a season alone with the Almighty? That were impossible: as with Nehemiah, what is to be done must be done on the moment, and in the presence of fellow-men. And it may be done. Blessed be God for this privilege of ejaculatory prayer, of silent, secret, instantaneous petition! We may live at the foot of the mercy-seat, and yet be immersed in merchandise, engrossed with occupation, or pursued by a crowd. We may hallow and enlighten every thing by prayer, though we seem, and are, engaged from morning to night with secular business, and thronged by eager adherents. We cannot be in a difficulty for which we have not time to ask guidance, in a peril so sudden that we cannot find a guardian, in a spot so remote that we may not people it with supporters. Thought, whose rapid flight distances itself, moves but half as quick as prayer: earth to heaven, and heaven again to earth, the petition and the answer, both are finished in that indivisible instant which suffices for the mind's passage through infinite space. O that you may not neglect the privilege, that you may cultivate the habit, of ejaculatory prayer! and that you may meditate on the example of Nehemiah. If I would incite you to habits of private devotion, I might show you Daniel in his chamber, "kneeling upon his knees

three times a day." If I would commend to you the public gatherings of the church, I might remind you of what David has said, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." If I would inculcate the duty of family prayer, I might turn attention to Philemon, and "the church in his house." But, wishing to make you carry, as it were, the altar about with you—the fire ever burning, the censer ever ready,—wishing that you may resolve nothing, attempt nothing, face nothing, without prayer to God for his ever-mighty grace, I give you for a pattern Nehemiah—who, asked by Artaxerxes for what he made request, tells you, "So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, Send me unto Judah, the city of the sepulchres of my fathers."

There is nothing that we need add in the way of concluding exhortation. The latter part, at least, of our subject has been so eminently practical, that we should fear to weaken the impression by repetition. Only, if there be any thing sacred and touching in the sep-

ulchres of our fathers; if the spot, where those dear to us sleep, seem haunted by their memory, so that it were like forgetting or insulting them to suffer it to be defiled, let us remember that the best monument we can rear to the righteous is our copy of their excellence—not the record of their virtues graven on the marble or on the brass, but their example repeated in our actions and habits. If with Nehemiah, we would show respect to the dead, with Nehemiah let us strive to be useful to the living. Then, when sepulchres shall crumble, not through human neglect, but because the Almighty bids them give back their prey, we may hope to meet our fathers in the triumph and the gloriousness of immortality. Our countenances shall not be sad, though "the place of their sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire," even with the last tremendous conflagration; we shall exult in knowing that they and we "have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

S E R M O N X I V .

JABEZ.*

* And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."—1 CHRON. IV. 9, 10.

If we had to fix on a portion of Scripture which might be removed from our Bibles without being much missed, we should probably select the first nine chapters of this first Book of Chroni-

cles. A mere record of names, a catalogue of genealogies; the eye glances rapidly over them, and we are inclined to hasten on to parts which may present something more interesting and instructive. Yet what a startling, what an impressive thing, should be a record of names, a catalogue of genealogies! the chapters deserve the closest atten-

*This Sermon was preached on New Year's day, and a collection was afterwards made in aid of a District Visiting Society.

tion, even if you keep out of sight their bearing on the descent and parentage of the Christ. It is a New Year's day sermon, this long list of fathers and their children. What are all these names which fill page after page? The names of beings who were once as warm with life as ourselves; who moved upon the earth as we move now; who had their joys, their sorrows, their hopes, their fears, their projects; who thought, perhaps, as little of death as many of us, but who were sooner or later cut down, even as all now present shall be. They are the names of those who once lived; nay, they are names of those who still live; and this is perhaps even the harder to realize of the two. The dead are not dead; they have but changed their place of sojourn. The mighty catalogue, which it wearies us to look at, is not a mere register of those who have been, of trees of the forest which, having flourished their appointed time, have withered or been cut down; it is a register of existing, intelligent, sentient creatures; not one who has been inscribed on the scroll which, headed by Adam, looks like a leaf from the volume of eternity, has ever passed into nothingness: written amongst the living, he was written amongst the immortal; earth might receive his dust, but his spirit, which is more nearly himself, has never known even a suspension of being: thousands of years ago the man was; at this moment the man is; thousands of years to come the man shall be.

We repeat it—there is something very hard to realize in this fact, that all who have ever lived are still alive.* We talk of an over-peopled country, even of an over-peopled globe—where and what, then, is the territory into which generation after generation has been swept, the home of the untold myriads, the rich, the poor, the mighty, the mean, the old, the young, the righteous, the wicked, who, having once been reckoned amongst men, must everlastingly remain inscribed in the chronicles of the race; inscribed in them, not as beings which have been, but as beings which are? We have all heard of the dissolute man, said to have been converted through hearing the fifth

chapter of the Book of Genesis, in which mention is made of the long lives of Adam, Seth, Enos, Methuselah, and others, and each notice is concluded with the words, "and he died." It came appallingly home to the dissolute man, that the most protracted life must end at last in death; he could not get rid of the fact that life had to terminate, and he found no peace till he had provided that it might terminate well. But suppose that each notice had been concluded, as it might have been, with the words, "and he lives," would there not have been as much, would there not have been more to startle and seize upon the dissolute man? "He died," does not necessarily involve a state of retribution; "he lives," crowds the future with images of judgment and recompense. You hear men often say, in regard of something which has happened, something which they have lost, something which they have done, or something which they have suffered, "Oh, it will be all the same a hundred years hence!" All the same a hundred years hence! far enough from that. They speak as if they should certainly be dead a hundred years hence, and as if, therefore, it would then necessarily have become unimportant what turn or course events may have taken. Whereas, they will be as truly alive a hundred years hence as they are now; and it will not be the same a hundred years hence whether this thing happened or that, this action were performed or that. For there is nothing so trivial but that it may affect man's future being: in the moral world, as in the physical, "no motion impressed by natural causes, or by human agency, is ever obliterated;"* of what, then, dare we affirm,

* Babbage, the ninth Bridgewater Treatise.— "What a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breathe! Every atom, impressed with good and with ill, retains at once the motions which philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined in ten thousand ways with all that is worthless and base. The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are for ever written all that man has ever said, or ever whispered. There, in their mutable but unerring characters, mixed with the earliest as well as the latest sighs of mortality, stand for ever recorded, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuating, in the united movements of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will.

"If the Almighty stamped on the brow of the earliest murderer the indelible and visible mark of his guilt, he has also established laws by which

* This fact is excellently treated in a striking sermon by Mr. Newman, on the "Individuality of the Soul."

that, let it be as it may, it will be all the same a hundred, or a thousand, or a million years hence ?

We recur, then, to what gave rise to these remarks ; the long lists of names which occupy the first nine chapters of this First Book of Chronicles. We affirm of these lists, that without any comment, they furnish a most appropriate sermon for New Year's day. Names of the dead, and yet names of the living, how should their mere enumeration suggest the thought of our days upon earth being as a shadow, and yet of those days being days of probation for an everlasting existence ! And what thought is so fitted to New Year's day, when, as we commence one of the great divisions of time, the very season might seem to speak of the rapid flight of life, and of the consequent duty of attempting forthwith preparation for the future ? To read these chapters of the Chronicles, is like entering a vast cemetery where sleep the dead of many generations. But a cemetery is the place for a New Year's day meditation, seeing that we have just consigned the old year to the grave, with its joys, its sorrows, its plans, its events, its mercies, its sins. And are they dead, the multitudes whose names are inscribed on the gloomy walls and crowded stones of the cemetery, Gomer, and Javan, and Tubal, and Nahor ? Nay, not so : their dust indeed is beneath our feet, but even that dust shall live again ; and all the while their spirits, conscious still, sentient still, occupy some unknown region, miserable or happy beyond what they ever were upon earth, though reserved for yet more of wretchedness or gladness at an approaching resurrection and general judgment. Neither is the past year dead : not a moment of it but lives and breathes, not one of its buried occurrences that has not a present existence, exercising some measure of influence over our actual condition, and reserved to exercise a yet stronger, when it shall come forth as a

witness at the last dread assize, bearing testimony which must help to determine whether we are to be for ever with the Lord, or banished for ever from the light of his presence. Thus these registered names might themselves serve as an appropriate sermon. God is witness that it is in perfect sincerity, and with every sentiment of christian affection, that, adopting the customary language, I wish you all a happy new year. But I must give a voice to the old year. It must speak to you from its sepulchre. No burying of the past as though it were never to revive. No reading of names in the Chronicles as though they were names of those who have altogether ceased to be. Oh, I wish you a happy new year ; but happy it shall not, cannot be, in any such sense as befits beings of such origin, such capacity, such destiny as yourselves, unless you bear diligently in mind that you are mortal, yet cannot die ; that things may be past, yet cannot perish ; that days may be forgotten, but never can forget.

We should receive, however, a wrong impression in regard of these chapters of the First Book of Chronicles, were we to suppose them valuable only on such accounts as have already been indicated. They are not a mere record of names, though on a cursory glance, we might conclude that they contained nothing else, and that therefore, after one or two general reflections, we might safely proceed to more instructive portions of Scripture. Interspersed with the names, there occur, here and there, brief, but pregnant, notices of persons and things, as though inserted to reward the diligent student, who, in place of taking for granted that a catalogue of names could not be worth reading, should go through it with all care, fearing to miss some word of information or admonition.

Our text is a remarkable case in point. Here is a chapter which seems made up of genealogies and names. Let me skip it, might be the feeling of the reader ; what good can I get from learning that "Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah ?" But if he were to skip it he would miss one of the most beautiful and interesting passages in the Bible, for such, we think to show you, is a just description of our text. We know

every succeeding criminal is not less irrevocably chained to the testimony of his crime ; for every atom of his mortal frame, through whatever changes its several particles may migrate, will still retain, adhering to it through every combination, some movement derived from that very muscular effort by which the crime itself was perpetrated."—Chapter ix. "On the Permanent Impression of our Words and Actions on the Globe we inhabit."

nothing whatsoever of the Jabez here commemorated beyond what we find in these two verses. But this is enough to mark him out as worthy, in no ordinary degree, of being admired and imitated. There is a depth, and a comprehensiveness, in the registered prayer of this unknown individual—unknown except from that prayer—which should suffice to make him a teacher of the righteous in every generation. And if we wanted a prayer especially suited to New Year's day, where could we find more appropriate utterances? If we would begin, as we ought to begin, the year with petitions that such portion of it as God may appoint us to spend upon earth may be spent in greater spiritual enlargement, in deeper purity of heart and of life, and in more abundant experience of the goodness of the Lord, than may have marked the past year, what more copious, more adequate, expressions could any one of us use than these, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me?" Happy, happy man, happy woman, happy child, who should pray this prayer in faith, and thus insure that it shall have to be said, as of Jabez, "And God granted him that which he requested." But this is anticipating our subject. Let us now take the several parts of the text in succession, commenting upon each, and searching out the lessons which may be useful to ourselves. The first verse contains a short account of Jabez; the second is occupied by his prayer. Come, and let us see whether there be not something to instruct us even in the brief narrative of his life, and whether, as "strangers and pilgrims upon earth," with a battle to fight, a race to run, an inheritance to possess, we can find more appropriate supplications than those in which this Jabez called on the Lord God of Israel.

Now there is no denying—for it is forced on us by every day's experience—that we are short-sighted beings, so little able to look into the future that we constantly miscalculate as to what would be for our good, anticipating evil from what is working for benefit, and reckoning upon benefit from that which may prove fraught with nothing but

evil. How frequently does that which we have baptized with our tears make the countenance sunny with smiles! how frequently, again, does that which we have welcomed with smiles wring from us tears! That which has raised anxious thoughts proves often a rich source of joy; and as often, that which hardly cost us a care, so bright was its promise, wounds to the quick, and burdens us with grief. We do not know the particular reasons which influenced the mother of Jabez to call him by that name, a name which means "Sorrowful." We are merely told, "His mother called his name Jabez, saying, because I bare him with sorrow." Whether it were that she brought forth this son with more than common anguish, or whether, as it may have been, the time of his birth were the time of her widowhood, so that the child came and found no father to welcome him—the mother evidently felt but little of a mother's joy, and looked on her infant with forebodings and fears. Perhaps it could hardly have been her own bodily suffering which made her fasten on the boy a dark and gloomy appellation, for, the danger past, she would rather have given a name commemorative of deliverance, remembering "no more her anguish for joy that a man was born into the world." Indeed, when Rachel bare Benjamin, she called his name Benoni, that is, the son of my sorrow; but then it was "as her soul was in departing, for she died." And when there pressed upon a woman in her travail heavier things than her bodily pains—as with the wife of Phinehas, to whom were brought sad "tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead"—the mind could fix on the more fatal facts, and perpetuate their remembrance through the name of the child; she called—and it was with her last breath, for she too, like Rachel, died—she called the child Ichabod, "saying, The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken."

We may well, therefore, suppose that the mother of Jabez had deeper and more lasting sorrows to register in the name of her boy than those of the giving him birth. And whatsoever may have been the cause, whether domestic affliction or public calamity, we

may consider the woman as having bent in bitterness over her new-born child, having only tears to give him as his welcome to the world, and feeling it impossible to associate with him even a hope of happiness. She had probably looked with different sentiments on her other children. She had clasped them to her breast with all a mother's gladness, and gazed upon them in the fond anticipation of their proving the supports and comforts of her own declining years. But with Jabez it was all gloom; the mother felt as if she could never be happy again: this boy brought nothing but an accession of care, anxiety, and grief; and if she must give him a name, let it be one which may always remind himself and others of the dark heritage to which he had been born. And yet the history of the family is gathered into the brief sentence, "Jabez was more honorable than his brethren." The child of sorrow outstripped all the others in those things which are "acceptable to God, and approved of men." Nothing is told us of his brethren, except that they were less honorable than himself; they too may have been excellent, and perhaps as much is implied, but Jabez took the lead, and whether or not the youngest in years, surpassed every other in piety and renown. Oh, if the mother lived to see the manhood of her sons, how strangely must the name Jabez, a name probably given in a moment of despondency and faithlessness, have fallen on her ear, as it was woven into message after message, each announcing that the child of sorrow was all that the most affectionate parent could wish, and more than the most aspiring could have hoped. She may then have regretted the gloomy and ominous name, feeling as though it reproached her for having yielded to her grief, and allowed herself to give way to dreary forebodings. It may have seemed to her as a standing memorial of her want of confidence in God, and of the falseness of human calculations; and as she embraced Jabez, whose every action endeared, as it ennobled him the more, she may have felt that the sorrow had to be transferred from the name to her own heart; she herself had to grieve, but only that, through mistrust of the Lord, she had recorded her fear where she should have exhibited her faith.

And is not this brief notice of the mother of Jabez full of warning and admonition to ourselves? How ready are we to give the name Jabez to persons or things, which, could we but look into God's purpose, or repose on his promise, we might regard as designed to minister permanently to our security and happiness. "All these things," said the patriarch Jacob, "are against me," as one trial after another fell to his lot: if he had been asked to name each event, the loss of Joseph, the binding of Simeon, the sending away of Benjamin, he would have written Jabez upon each—so dark did it seem, to him so sure to work only wo. And yet, as you all know, it was by and through these gloomy dealings that a merciful God was providing for the sustenance of the patriarch and his household, for their support and aggrandizement in a season of extraordinary pressure. As Joseph said to his brethren, "God did send me before you to preserve life"—what man would have named Jabez was God's minister for good. Thus it continually happens in regard of ourselves. We give the sorrowful title to that which is designed for the beneficent end. Judging only by present appearances, allowing our fears and feelings, rather than our faith, to take the estimate or fix the character of occurrences, we look with gloom on our friends, and with melancholy on our sources of good. Sickness, we call it Jabez, though it may be sent to minister to our spiritual health; poverty, we call it Jabez, though coming to help us to the possession of heavenly riches; bereavement, we call it Jabez, though designed to graft us more closely into the household of God. O for a better judgment! or rather, O for a simpler faith! We cannot indeed see the end from the beginning, and therefore cannot be sure that what rises in cloud will set in vermilion and gold; but we need not take upon ourselves to give the dark name, as though we could not be deceived in regard of the nature. The mother of him who proved "more honorable than his brethren" may have been unable to prognosticate aught but sorrow for and from this child—so much of threatening aspect may have hung round his entrance upon life—but she should have called him by a name expressive of dependence on God, ra-

ther than of despondency and soreness of heart.

Let us derive this lesson from the concise but striking narrative in the first verse of our text. Let us neither look confidently on what promises best, nor despairingly on what wears the most threatening appearance. God often wraps up the withered leaf of disappointment in the bright purple bud, and as often unfolds the golden flower of enjoyment in the nipped and blighted shoot. Experience is full of evidence that there is no depending on appearances; that things turn out widely different from what could have been anticipated; the child of most promise perhaps living to pierce as with a sword, the child of least, to apply balsam to the wound; events which have menaced ministering to happiness, and those which have come like enemies doing the office of friends. So that, if there be one duty more pressed upon us by what we might observe than another, it is that of waiting meekly upon the Lord, never cherishing a wish that we might choose for ourselves, and never allowing a doubt that he orders all for our good. Oh, be careful that you pronounce not harshly of his dealings, that you provoke him not by speaking as though you could see through his purpose, and decide on its being one of unmixed calamity. If you are so ready with your gloomy names, he may suspend his gracious designs. If, in a spirit of repining or unbelief, you brand as Jabez what may be but a blessing in disguise, no marvel if sometimes, in just anger and judgment, he allow the title to prove correct, and suffer not this Jabez, this child born in sorrow, to become to you as otherwise it might, more honorable, more profitable, than any of its brethren.

But let us now turn to the prayer of Jabez: there might be a sermon made on each petition; but we must content ourselves with a brief comment on the successive requests. Yet we ought not to examine the prayer without pausing to observe to whom it is addressed. It is not stated that Jabez called on God, but on "the God of Israel:" and, unimportant as this may seem on a cursory glance, it is a particular which, duly pondered, will be found full of beauty and interest.

There are few things more significant

than the difference in the manner in which God is addressed by saints under the old and under the new dispensation. Patriarchs pray to God as the God of their fathers; Apostles pray to him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In both forms of address there is an intimation of the same fact, that we need something to encourage us in approaching unto God; that exposed as we are to his just wrath for our sins, we can have no confidence in speaking to him as to absolute Deity. There must be something to lean upon, some plea to urge, otherwise we can but shrink from the presence of One so awful in his gloriousness; our lips must be sealed; for what can it avail that corrupt creatures should ask mercies from a Being, all whose attributes pledge him to the pouring on them vengeance? They may tell you that prayer is the voice of nature—but it is of nature in utter ignorance of itself and of God. The savage offers his petitions to the unknown spirit of the mountain or the flood; yes—to the unknown spirit: let the savage be better informed as to what God is, let him be also taught as to what himself is, and he will be more disposed to the silence of despair than to the importunity of supplication. We must, then, have some title with which to address God—some title which, interfering not with his majesty or his mysteriousness, may yet place him under a character which shall give hope to the sinful as they prostrate themselves before him. We need not say, that under the Gospel dispensation, this title should be that which is used by St. Paul, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Having such a Mediator through whom to approach, there is no poor supplicant who may not come with boldness to the mercy-seat. But under earlier dispensations, when the mediatorial office was but imperfectly made known, men had to seize on other pleas and encouragements; and then it was a great thing, that they could address God as you continually find him addressed, as the God of Israel, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The title assured them that God was ready to hear prayer and to answer it. They went before God, thronged, as it were, with remembrances of mercies bestowed, deliverances vouchsafed, evils

averted: how could they fear that God was too great to be addressed, too occupied to reply, or too stern to show kindness, when they bore in mind how they had shielded their parents, hearkened to their cry, and proved himself unto them "a very present help" in all time of trouble?

Ah, and though under the new dispensation, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" be the great character under which God should be addressed by us in prayer, there is no need for our altogether dropping the title, the God of our fathers. It might often do much to cheer a sorrowful heart and to encourage a timid, to address God as the God of our fathers. The God in whom my parents' trusted, the God who heard my parents' cries, the God who supplied my parents' wants—oh, there is many a poor wanderer who would be more encouraged, and more admonished, through such a remembrance of God as this, than through all the definitions of a rigid theology. There are some here—the mother did not, indeed, give them the name Jabez at their birth; she looked on them hopefully, with eyes brimful of gladness; but they have since sorely wrung the hearts of their parents—disobedient, dissipated, thankless, that sharper thing, it is said, than the tooth of the serpent. There are some such here; some who helped to bring down a father's "grey hairs with sorrow to the grave:" others, whose parents still survive; but if you could look in unexpectedly on those parents, you might often find them shedding scalding tears, shedding them on account of a child who is to them a Jabez, as causing only grief, whatever brighter name they gave him amid the hopes and promises of baptism. We speak to those of you whose consciences bear witness, that their parents would have predicted but truth had they named them Jabez, that is, sorrowful. We want to bring you to begin the new year with resolutions of amendment and vows of better things. But resolutions and vows are worth nothing, except as made in God's strength and dependence on his grace. And therefore must you pray to God: it were vain to hope any thing from you unless you will give yourselves to prayer. But how shall you address God, the God whom you have neglected, the God whom you have provoked, the God of whom

you might justly fear, that he is too high, too holy, and too just, to receive petitions from such as ourselves? Oh, we might give you lofty titles, but they would only bewilder you; we might define him by his magnificent attributes, but they would rather terrify than encourage you. But it may soften, and at the same time strengthen you; it may aid your contrition, wring from you tears, and yet fill you with hope, to go before God with all the imagery around you of the home of your childhood, the mind's eye arraying the reverend forms of those who gave you birth, as they kneel down in anguish, and cry unto the Lord—ay, cry on your behalf, and cry not in vain; for it may be in answer to their prayer, that you will now attempt to pray. Oh, we shall indeed hope for you, ye wanderers, ye prodigals, if, when ye go hence, ye will seek the solitude of your chambers and fall upon your knees, and, allowing memory to do its office, however painful and reproachful, address God, as Jabez addressed him, as the God of Israel, the God of your parents.

And what did Jabez pray for? for great things—great, if you suppose him to have spoken only as an heir of the temporal Canaan, greater if you ascribe to him acquaintance with the mercies of redemption. "Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed!" Lay the emphasis on that word "indeed." Many things pass for blessings which are not; to as many more we deny, though we ought to give the character. There is a blessing in appearance which is not also a blessing in reality; and conversely, the reality may exist where the appearance is wanting. The man in prosperity appears to have, the man in adversity to be without a blessing—yet how often does God bless by withholding and withdrawing! more frequently, it may be, than by giving and continuing. Therefore, "Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed." Let me not have what looks like blessing, and perhaps is not, but what is blessing, however unlike it may appear. Let it come under any form, disappointment, tribulation, persecution, only "bless me indeed!" bless me, though it be with the rod. I will not prescribe the nature of the dealing; deal with me as Thou wilt, with the blow or with the balm, only "bless me indeed!" And Jabez goes on, "That thou

wouldest enlarge my coast." He probably speaks as one who had to win from the enemy his portion of the promised land. He knew that, as the Lord said to Joshua, "There remained yet very much land to be possessed:" it was not then necessarily as a man desirous of securing to himself a broader inheritance, it may have been as one who felt jealous that the idolater should still defile what God had set apart for his people, that he entreated the enlargement of his coast. And a christian may use the same prayer; he, too, has to ask that his coast may be enlarged. Who amongst us has yet taken possession of one half the territory assigned him by God? Of course we are not speaking of the inheritance that is above, of share in the land whereof Canaan was the type, and which we cannot enter but by dying. But there is a present inheritance, "a land flowing with milk and with honey," which is ours in virtue of adoption into the family of God, but much of which we allow to remain unpossessed, through deficiency in diligence or in faith. Our privileges as christians, as members of an apostolical church, as heirs of the kingdom of heaven, how are these practically undervalued, how little are they realized, how sluggishly appropriated! We remain—alas, we are contented to remain—in suspense as to our spiritual condition, in the enjoyment of but a fraction of the ministrations appointed by the church, in low attainments, contracted views, and half performed duties. What districts of unpossessed territory are there in the Bible! how much of that blessed book has been comparatively unexamined by us! We have our favorite parts, and give only an occasional and cursory notice to the rest. How little practical use do we make of God's promises! how slow is our progress in that humbleness of mind, that strength of faith, and that holiness of life, which are as much a present reward as an evidence of fitness for the society of heaven! What need then for the prayer, "Oh that thou wouldest enlarge my coast!" I would not be circumscribed in spiritual things. I would not live always within these narrow bounds. There are bright and glorious tracts beyond. I would know more of God, more of Christ, more of myself. I cannot be content to remain

as I am, whilst there is so much to do, so much to learn, so much to enjoy. Oh for an enlargement of coast, that I may have a broader domain of christian privilege, more eminences from which to catch glimpses of the fair rich land hereafter to be reached, and wider sphere in which to glorify God by devoting myself to his service. It is a righteous covetousness, this for an enlargement of coast; for he has done little, we might almost say nothing, in religion, who can be content with what he has done. It is a holy ambition, this which pants for an ampler territory. But are we only to pray? are we not also to struggle, for the enlargement of our coasts? Indeed we are: observe how Jabez proceeds, "And that thine hand might be with me." He represents himself as arming for the enlargement of his coast, but as knowing all the while that "the battle is the Lord's." Be it thus with ourselves; we will pray that, during the coming year, our coasts may be enlarged; oh for more of those deep havens where the soul may anchor in still waters of comfort! oh for a longer stretch of those sunny shores whereon the tree of life grows, and where angel visitants seem often to alight! But, in order to this enlargement, let us give ourselves to closer study of the word, to a more diligent use of the ordinances of the church, and to harder struggle with the flesh. Only let all be done with the practical consciousness that "except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that build it." This will be to arm ourselves, like Jabez, for the war, but, like Jabez, to expect success only so far as God's hand shall be with us.

There is one more petition in the prayer of him who named with a dark and inauspicious name, yet grew to be "more honorable than his brethren." "That thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me." It is not an entreaty for actual exemption from evil—it were no pious wish to have no evil whatsoever in our portion: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Jabez prayed not for the being kept from evil, but kept from the being grieved by evil. And there is a vast difference between the being visited by evil, and grieved by evil. He is grieved by evil, who does not receive it meekly and submissively, as the

chastisement of his heavenly Father. He is grieved by evil, whom evil injures, in place of benefits—which latter is always God's purpose in his permission or appointment. He is grieved by evil, whom it drives into sin, and to whom, therefore, it furnishes cause of bitter repentance.

You see, then, that Jabez showed great spiritual discernment in casting his prayer into this particular form. We too should pray, not absolutely that God would keep us from evil, but that he would so keep it from us, or us from it, that it may not grieve us. The coming year can hardly fail to bring with it its portion of trouble. There are individuals here who will have much to endure, whether in person, or family, or substance. It is scarcely assuming the place of the prophet, if I say that I see the funeral procession, moving from some of your doors, and sorrow, under one shape or another, breaking like an armed man into many of your households. But if it were too much to hope that evil may not come, it is not too much to pray that evil may not grieve. Ah, if we knew approaching events, we should, perhaps, be ready to give the name Jabez to the year which has this day been born. And yet may this Jabez be more honorable than his brethren, a year of enlargement of our coasts, of greater acquisition in spiritual things, of growth in grace, of closer conformity to the image of Christ. It is not the tribulation with which its days may be charged, which can prevent such result; nay, rather, it may only advance it. And it shall be this, if we but strive to cultivate that submissiveness of spirit, that firm confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the Lord, that disposition to count nothing really injurious but what injures the soul, yea, every thing profitable from which the soul may gain good, which may all be distinctly traced in the simple, comprehensive petition, "Oh that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me."

Now we have thus endeavored to interweave with our subject-matter of discourse such reflections and observations as might be specially appropriate to a New Year's day. But there is one thing of which I had almost lost sight. I have to ask you for a New Year's day present, not indeed for myself, which I

might hesitate to do, but for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, in whose name I may beg, and have nothing to blush at, unless it were a refusal. Of all days in the year, this is peculiarly a day for "sending portions" to the distressed, sending them as a thank-offering for the many mercies with which the past year has been marked. And our long-established and long-tried District Society for visiting and relieving the poor of the neighborhood, makes its annual appeal to you for the means of carrying on its benevolent work. It appeals to the regular congregation, as to those whose engine and instrument it especially is: it appeals also to strangers; for they who come hither to join in our worship, may with all justice be asked to assist us in our charities. I need not dwell on the excellences of this society. I shall venture to say, that, through the kindness and zeal of our visitors, whom we can never sufficiently thank, but whom God will reward—for theirs is the fine christian benevolence, the benevolence which gives time, the benevolence which gives labor, the benevolence which seeks no showy stage, no public scene, but is content to ply, patient and unobserved, in the hovels of poverty and at the bedside of sickness; I shall venture to say, that, through the kindness of these visitors, a vast deal is daily done towards alleviating sorrow, lightening distress, and bringing the pastor into contact with the sick and the erring of his flock. It were very easy to sketch many pictures which might incline you to be even more than commonly liberal in your New Year's day gift. But I shall attempt only one, and furnish nothing but the briefest outline even of that. There is a mother in yonder wretched and desolate room, who has but lately given birth to a boy; and there is no father to welcome him, for, only a few weeks back, half broken-hearted, she laid her husband in the grave. What shall she call that boy, thus born to her in the midst of wretchedness and anguish? Oh, by no cheerful name. She feels, as she bends over him, as if he were indeed the child of sorrow: so dreary is her state, so friendless, that, were it not for the strivings of that sweet and sacred thing, a mother's fondness for her babe, she could almost wish

him with his father in the grave, that he might not have to share her utter destitution. Left to herself, she could but, like the Jewish mother, call his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bare him with sorrow." But she is not left to herself: a kind voice bids her be of good cheer; a friendly hand brings her nourishment: she looks smilingly on her child, for she has been suddenly made to hear, and to taste of the loving-kindness of God, "the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless." Oh, what a change has passed over that lonely and wretched apartment; you will not ask through what instrumen-

tality, but you will thank God that such an instrumentality is in active operation around you; you will do your best to keep up its efficiency. And as that suffering woman no longer thinks of calling her child Jabez, that is, Sorrowful, but rather wishes some title expressive of thanksgiving and hopefulness; you will so share her gladness as to feel how appropriately the organ's solemn swell now summons you to join in the doxology:

" Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

S E R M O N S

ON CERTAIN OF THE

LESS PROMINENT FACTS AND REFERENCES IN SACRED STORY.

SECOND SERIES.

S E R M O N I.

THE YOUNG MAN IN THE LINEN CLOTH.

* And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."—ST. MARK, xiv. 51, 52.

St. Mark is the only Evangelist who mentions this occurrence: we cannot, therefore, as we often may, by a comparison of accounts, obtain a fuller narrative of facts, and thereby settle with more precision what particular truths may have been illustrated or enforced. But if we have only this single account, it goes sufficiently into detail to afford much scope for thought and inquiry; the facts would not have been related at all, and much less with such careful accuracy, had they not been facts which it was important for us to know; and they would have been related, we may venture to believe, more than once, had not their single statement sufficed for information and instruction.

That it was a young man, though no clue is given to his name or condition; that he followed Christ, when his professed disciples forsook him and fled; that he was clad in a linen cloth; that his linen cloth was his only garment; that he was seized by the young men who were hurrying Jesus to the high priest; that, being thus seized, he strug-

gled away, but left his garment behind—these facts are all given with evident carefulness of detail, the Evangelist appearing anxious that we should not pass over the occurrence as though it were unimportant, but should pause and consider why it was permitted to happen, or why, at least, it was directed to be recorded.

Whatever is in any way connected with the apprehension, trial, and crucifixion of our blessed Redeemer, ought to possess for us a special interest; an incident which we might have passed over as of no great importance, had it not been associated with such awful transactions, acquires solemnity, and demands attention, when found in that series of events, of which it is hard to say whether it should most move our awe or our gratitude.

We cannot, therefore, content ourselves with a brief or cursory notice of the circumstances related in our text. We rather regard it as intended to be made the subject of patient and prayerful meditation, and as fraught with deep

and mystic significance. The facts, though given, as we have seen, with considerable detail, are abruptly introduced, and as abruptly dismissed. The young man is brought suddenly on the scene: we are not informed whether he was a disciple of Christ; there is no mention of his motive in following Christ at such a moment and in such a dress; so soon as he has escaped from the crowd, not a word is added which might assist us in conjecturing why the Evangelist interrupted the course of his narrative, to insert what seems to have so little to do with the tragic story of our Lord's closing scene.

This very abruptness, this very mysteriousness, should obtain for the facts our serious attention. We ought to be convinced that what is so strangely introduced was designed to arrest our thoughts, and to reward the study of which we might make it the subject. Let us then, without further preface, apply ourselves to the examination of the facts which St. Mark sets before us in the words of our text. As our blessed Redeemer is being hurried from Gethsemane to the palace of the high priest, let us join ourselves to the crowd, and endeavor to ascertain what there was to deserve the being specially noted by the sacred historian, in that Christ was followed by a young man, with a linen cloth cast about his naked body; that this young man was seized on by the rabble; and that "he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked."

Now we will first glance at the more ordinary comment which is put on the facts, though with no purpose of recommending it as in any sense satisfactory, but rather that we may show it to be vague and inadequate. You are to observe the point of time at which the facts now before us occurred. Our Lord had just passed through his fearful agony in the garden, when his sweat had been, as it were, great drops of blood, and thrice had He entreated, that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him. On his returning a third time to his disciples, who, notwithstanding the awfulness of the hour, had been overcome with sleep, He was met by Judas, one of the twelve, who had come accompanied by a great multitude with swords and staves to seize Him, and carry Him before the high priest. Gethsemane was

at the foot of the Mount of Olives; when, therefore, Judas and his crew had seized upon Christ, they had to pass through the suburbs of the city, where any tumult in the dead of the night may have been most unusual, in order to reach the high priest's palace. And the common supposition is, that the young man, wakened by the strange disturbance in the street, had thrown a sheet round him, as the first thing which came to hand; that he had then rushed down to inquire the cause of the uproar; and that, hearing of the apprehension of Jesus, whom he must have known by report, or to whom he may have been secretly attached, he determined to follow, whether from curiosity or a better motive, that he might see how the matter would end.

But if this were all, it would really be hard to say for what purpose, or with what view, the facts have been recorded. Admitting that all Scripture has been written for our learning, it might not be easy to understand what particular lessons were conveyed through the mention of a young man who had been roused from his sleep by a noise in the street, who had not waited to dress himself before hurrying to find out what occasioned the tumult, and who was handled somewhat roughly by the crowd with whom he had mixed in so strange an attire. To say nothing of the many improbabilities in the story as thus explained, for surely it was in the highest degree improbable that any one would have descended into the street in the middle of the night, with nothing but a sheet thrown round him; or, at all events, that, if he had come to the door in this dress, he would have thought of following the crowd into the city without waiting to put on some garment;—but passing by these improbabilities, and allowing that we have nothing but the account of a young man who did a strange and foolish thing, what are we the better for the narrative? What light does it throw on the concluding scenes of Christ's life? What information, or what instruction, does it furnish us in any way in keeping with the tremendous occurrences which the Evangelist had taken in hand to narrate?

The commentators, indeed, remark that the treatment which the young man received, shows that the whole transac-

tion was conducted with extreme violence, and therefore serves to make it the more memorable that the Apostles had all been suffered to escape, and the more evident that Christ had secretly and powerfully influenced the minds of the fierce rabble by whom He had been seized. But we do not see that it can fairly be said, on the explanation just given of the occurrence in question, that the crowd treated the young man with any great violence: the best-humored mob might lay hold of a person who joined them in so strange an attire; and his own fear, rather than their fury, may have occasioned his fleeing away, and leaving his garment behind. Had they been set on doing him a mischief, they might easily have prevented his escape. Hence the common explanation of the incidents before us, resolving them into a mere working of curiosity on the part of the young man, and of ill-nature on that of the crowd, can hardly be pronounced other than utterly unsatisfactory. It leaves the facts themselves most improbable, and the reasons for their having been related quite insufficient; so that you must, we think, be ready to acknowledge that there is good ground for our searching for some deeper interpretation, for our concluding that the Evangelist designed to convey some more important intimations than have yet been derived, when he brought so strangely into his story this unknown young man, and as strangely dismissed him—as though a spectre had suddenly risen in the midst of the crowd, and then had as suddenly disappeared.

But now let us examine more attentively what the dress was which this young man wore; we may be thereby enabled to form a more correct opinion as to the occurrences under review. You often meet with the mention of linen in the New Testament; but you are not to think that, whenever the word occurs in English, the same word occurs in the Greek. For example, you read of the rich man in the parable, that he was "clothed in purple and fine linen." You read also, in the Book of Revelation, that it was granted unto the Lamb's wife, "that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." But the linen spoken of in these cases is defined in the original by a totally

different word from that used in our text. Indeed, the word used in our text occurs but seldom in the New Testament, and, what is very remarkable, in every other place in which it occurs, it relates to the garment which it was then customary to wrap round the dead. "When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth;"—in a clean sindon, for that is the word,—or, as we should probably have said, in a clean shroud. Thus again, it is said by St. Mark, in regard of Joseph of Arimathea, and the body of our Lord, "he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen." Here the use of the words "fine linen" at one moment, and immediately afterwards of the single word "linen," might lead you to suppose a difference in the original expressions. But there is no difference. "He bought the sindon, and took him down, and wrapped him in the sindon." St. Luke has the same word in reference to the same circumstance. "He took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone." But we believe there is no other place in which the word occurs in the Greek Testament; so that, excepting the instance of our text, the Evangelists use the word to express only the particular garment in which it was then usual to enfold the bodies of the dead.

Now we do not wish you to conclude from this, that the word was never employed but of the raiment of the dead—for such was not the fact; but that it was employed to denote a particular kind of garment, and would not be used of any covering which a man might throw over him, just because the covering happened to be of linen. If a man, starting from his sleep, had cast a sheet round him, he would not on that account have been said to have been clad in the sindon. In fact, the sindon—and it probably took its name from the city of Sidon, the Sidonians having invented the art of weaving this kind of clothing—was a cloak, made of linen, which was frequently worn in Jerusalem, and especially in summer. But besides serving as a covering to the body, the sindon was turned to a religious account. It was to this cloak that the scrupulous observers of the law were accustomed to fasten those fringes of which you

read in the Book of Numbers. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue." With this sindon also it was that the Jews commonly covered their heads when they prayed. Hence, whilst any one might wear the sindon, merely as an ordinary garment, others might wear it by way of religious distinction; that is, they might wear it in such a manner, or with such peculiarity, as to make it indicative of special strictness, of a rigid adherence to the law of God, or the traditions of the elders.

And this latter would appear to have been the case with the young man of whom we read in our text. It is expressly noted by the Evangelist, that this young man had the sindon "cast about his naked body." He had nothing on except the sindon. And this was not usual. The sindon was commonly used for an outer garment—it was worn, that is, over some other. But there were many amongst the Jews who affected great austerity, devotees who attracted attention by extreme self-denial in diet and dress. Josephus describes himself as having spent much of his youth in the austerities enjoined by different sects, and mentions his living for three years in the wilderness with an enthusiast, who would wear no garment but what was made of the leaves or bark of trees, and would eat no food but what grew of its own accord. What then seems more likely, if you throw together the several considerations thus advanced, than that the young man who followed Christ was a devotee, a person that assumed a peculiar sanctity of deportment, and who, therefore, wore only the sindon, whilst others used a double garment, that he might show greater contempt for the body, and more rigorous habits of self-mortification?

There is no reason for supposing him to have been a disciple of Christ; in all probability he was not; but he was one of those Jews who practised great austerities, and whose dress was meant to indicate a claim or pretension to extraordinary holiness of life. Neither is it to be concluded that he had just been roused from his sleep, and had hurried down as one eager to know the cause

of the tumult; it is as likely that he may have been with the crowd from the first; yea, he may have been as inveterate as any of the rest against Christ: for he may have been a hypocrite as well as a devotee; and the pretender to great holiness will be sure to hate the actual possessor.

But, upon this supposition, what are we to say to the conduct of the multitude? why did the mob fall on the young man, and handle him so roughly? We gave, as a great reason for rejecting the ordinary explanation of the narrative, that it threw no light on the series of events which the Evangelist had taken in hand to relate, that it left us with no sufficient account why he interrupted the sad tale of the sufferings of Christ. But we may make a very different statement in regard to the present supposition, which sets before us the young man as a religious devotee, and as known to be such by the garment which he wore. From the manner in which the multitude treated the assumption or appearance of extraordinary holiness, we may learn something of the temper by which they were actuated, and thus be guided to right conclusions in regard to their hatred of Christ.

It was, we believe, a religious hatred, a hatred, we mean, on religious grounds, or on account of religion, which moved the great body of the Jews against the blessed Redeemer. It is easy to speak of the political feeling, of the disappointment experienced when Christ gave them no hope of setting up a temporal kingdom, and advancing them to sovereignty over their haughty oppressors. And no doubt this political feeling had its play; in many there may have been a dogged resolution, that they would rather have no Messiah than one not likely to fulfil their dream of national supremacy. For it would seem, though it be an awful thing to say, that Christ was rejected by many, not in disbelief of his being the Messiah, but in spite of a thorough conviction that He was. The parable of the wicked husbandmen implies as much as this. "When the husbandman saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." They distinctly knew the son, you observe; they do not act under any mistake, any false

impression, as to his person; and they deliberately proceed to kill him, because he is the son, because he is the heir, and, as such, in the way of their covetous or ambitious designs. But in regard of the great mass of the Jews, it is hardly to be thought that it was the feeling of political disappointment which made them so bitter and malignant against Christ. On mere political grounds our Lord, after all, was such a leader as might have well suited the people. He could heal all their diseases, He could sustain them in the wilderness; He had the mastery over evil spirits; and their natural impulse must have been, not to reject a leader thus endowed, because He showed disinclination to assuming the department of a king, but rather to make Him a king in spite of Himself, and then see whether He would not wield his powers in advancing them to greatness.

But the galling thing, the thing most keenly felt by all classes of the Jews, was the holiness of our Lord: He did not suit them as a leader, because He would make no truce with their evil passions, and allow no indulgence to their lusts. Had He made greater allowance for human frailty, had He not so expanded the morality of the law as to make it denounce the adultery of a look, and the murder of a thought, many, both in earlier days and in later, would have given Him their adherence, and have become his disciples. The main cause of irritation and dislike has all along been the same; it is in active play now, and came into play so soon as it was seen that Christ displayed, and demanded, the strictest purity of action, and word, and thought; if Christianity would but be a little more indulgent to men's vices, it would quickly carry their votes.

But if it were a dislike of Christ, as an uncompromising teacher of holiness, which chiefly moved, or actuated the multitude, we may naturally look to find some exhibition of the fact in their conduct; not indeed, any open declaration—for the worst will hardly confess that it is goodness which they hate—but some ebullition of temper, which shall give the same witness, though not equally direct.

And this we have in the narrative of our text. A young man is seen in the

crowd, whose dress lays claim to special strictness and sanctity of life. Then forthwith breaks out the real feeling of the crowd. They seize the occasion of giving vent to that bitter animosity at holiness, which was really, if not confessedly, the producing cause of their persecution of Jesus. They jostle this young man; they lay hold on him; they strip him of the garment which passed as a sign of devotedness to religion; and thus they plainly showed by what spirit they were actuated, or put beyond doubt the motives which chiefly urged them to their murderous design. Thirsting for Christ's blood, because He had reprov'd vice, and required righteousness, they could not tolerate amongst them even the appearance of superior holiness. The young man presented that appearance, and therefore they turned upon him, as hounds upon their prey, and forced him to escape naked for his life.

And we cannot forbear from pointing out to you how naturally, on this supposition, each part of St. Mark's narrative follows on the other. On being seized by the multitude, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not; but the Scripture must be fulfilled." What effect was this reference to his teaching likely to produce upon the multitude? That teaching had had for its main object the inculcation of righteousness of life, the abandonment of every form and working of iniquity. And on this account, as we now suppose, the teaching had been distasteful, and had excited the animosity of the people. Hence an allusion to the teaching was likely to irritate the mob; and we may believe them to have been all the more furious, when Christ had reminded them of his discourses in the temple. Then follow the words, "And they all forsook him and fled." The disciples, seeing the irritated state of the rabble, were afraid to remain any longer near their master, and betook themselves to flight. Then immediately comes the account in our text, and how naturally it comes, in what close keeping with what had preceded. The multitude, infuriated at being reminded of what Christ had taught them, would

have fallen on the disciples; but the disciples had escaped: on whom then shall the mob wreak its malice and spite? The Evangelist proceeds to tell us—and nothing could more show the feeling, the temper of the crowd; nothing could more distinctly inform us of a fact, of which it is important that we be assured, that the main producing cause of the hatred shown to Christ was the holiness of his life, and the purity of his doctrine—the Evangelist proceeds to tell us that there was a young man following Christ, whose dress indicated pretensions to extraordinary sanctity; and that the multitude seized on this young man, so that he was forced, by their violence, to leave the linen cloth with which he was clad, and to flee away from them naked.

Now this is so far a sufficient explanation of the occurrence before us, that it makes the dress of the young man give a clue to his character, that it accounts for the treatment which he received from the mob, and that it throws light on the reasons which moved the Jews to the rejection of Christ. But, nevertheless, we believe that a yet deeper meaning attaches to the incidents in question; that these incidents were symbolical or figurative: in other words, that they were designed to shadow forth the facts of our Redeemer's final triumph over death.

Let us refer for a moment to the ordinances which have respect to the great day of atonement, that day of especial solemnity under the legal dispensation, when expiation was made for the sins of the people. On that day the prescription of the law was, that the high priest should take two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. One of these goats he was to kill as a sin-offering, to bring its blood within the vail, and "sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat." Upon the head of the other he was to lay both his hands, confessing "over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat;" and the goat, thus burdened with the guiltiness of the congregation, was to be let go into the wilderness, into "a land not inhabited."

There is no debate that these goats,

taken together, constituted a type of the Redeemer. So vast was his office, so wondrous his work, that figures had to be doubled, ere they could furnish any thing like a sufficient representation. In the goat that was slain, we have the Redeemer presenting Himself as a sin offering unto God, shedding the precious blood which was to be carried within the vail, that intercession might be made, throughout all time, for the Church. In the goat that was sent alive into the wilderness, bearing away all the iniquities of the people, we have the Redeemer risen from the grave, and effecting the thorough justification of all who should believe on his name, their sins being so removed, or borne to an uninhabited land, that, though searched for, they may not be found. It is evident that one goat would not have been an adequate type, seeing that the Messiah had to be represented, not only as "delivered for our offences," but as "raised again for our justification." But the two goats furnished a sufficient and accurate figure; the one having been significant of our Lord as offered on the cross, the other as returning from the grave: so that, together, they shadowed out the sacrifice presented, the acceptance of the sacrifice, and its prevalence as a propitiation for the sins of the world.

But now was it not in a measure to be expected, that, when the time came which the great day of atonement had all along prefigured, there would be something to remind men of the double type? something, at least, to assure the devout Jew, who should look sorrowingly upon Christ led away as the goat to the slaughter, that he would yet behold in him the live goat, escaping to a far land, and bearing into forgetfulness the sins of the people? And with what precision was the double type embodied, if you observe that the crowd, with Judas at their head, lay hold not only upon Jesus, but on the young man who followed him, clothed in the sindon, the linen garment that was usually wrapped round the dead! We have shown you, that, except in describing the dress of this young man, the Evangelists nowhere mention the sindon but where they have to speak of the raiment in which Christ was consigned to the grave. This is surely very remarkable:

it is as though to force us to connect in some way the appearance, the mysterious appearance, of the young man so strangely attired, with the burial of Christ; to compel us to assign it a prophetic or typical character, in place of passing it over as an incident from which little can be learned. As Christ is led to trial, and, therefore, virtually, to crucifixion, He is followed by a young man having nothing on his naked body but the vesture in which, after having been crucified, Christ would be laid by Joseph in the tomb. The same parties who have seized Christ, lay hold on this young man, and try to detain him. But though he is but one against a multitude, he escapes from their hands—he escapes; but he escapes naked, leaving the grave-clothes behind him. Is not this Christ, who, when He had put on the grave-clothes, was not to be kept in the grave by all the malice and power of His enemies; but who sprang from the grasp of the tomb, leaving in it the raiment in which He had been bound up for burial?

So then, just as, on the great day of atonement, in looking at the two goats held by the high priest, you looked on an accurate exhibition of the two grand facts, that Christ died for our sins, and that he rose for our justification; so, in now looking upon Jesus led to the slaughter, and at the same moment upon the young man fleeing away naked, you may be said to take in at one glance, the tragedy of the crucifixion, and the triumph of the resurrection. The young man is brought upon the scene clothed as an inhabitant of the grave, that there might be a filling up of the picture which would otherwise have presented nothing but the dark lines of death—a filling it up with the wondrous exhibition of that very person, who was now being hurried to an ignominious end, breaking loose from the hold even of the sepulchre itself, leaving evidence behind, in “the linen clothes laid by themselves,” of his having spoiled death of its sting, and the grave of its victory.

I do not know how, to a mind fraught with the typical instruction of the great day of atonement, there could have been more beautiful or appropriate manifestations of the truth, that Christ would quickly rise, and, in rising, perfect the justification of his Church. I know not

whether there were any who deciphered, and made use of the manifestation. But it is easy to imagine, and instructive to suppose, that some studied the incidents, and drew from them the purposed intelligence. There may have been in the crowd a devout and aged Jew, like Simeon, who had long been diligent in the services of the Temple, searching in those services for notices of the scheme of redemption, for types or figures of the deliverance promised, from the earliest time, to the fallen race of men. And such a Jew would naturally have given his special study to the solemnities of the great day of atonement. These solemnities, more than any other, would have made pass before him, in fearful procession, the dark, yet glorious, things of the Messiah’s endurance and achievements. And now he holds with himself an engrossing debate, as to whether The being, who had wrought so many wonders, but is now in the hands of bloodthirsty persecutors, can indeed be the Christ so long, and so ardently expected. There is nothing in his being led to the slaughter, to persuade him that He cannot be the Christ: he remembers the slaying of the goat for a sin-offering, and feels that without shedding of blood can be no remission. But then he also remembers, that side by side with the goat for a sin-offering, used to stand a goat on which death might not pass—the typical exhibition thus cheering the worshipper with the certainty that the sin-offering would suffice, that the victim, substituted in his stead, would re-appear after death, and prevail, in the largest sense, to the removing all his guilt. O for something of the like double representation, if this indeed be the victim appointed of God for the redemption of the world! O for something to correspond to the goat escaping as well as to the goat dying! The wish is granted. Close by the Lord Jesus, clad in raiment which might seem to indicate an inhabitant of the grave, stands a young man, fixing attention by the strangeness of his attire. As the devout Jew gazes on this figure, hardly knowing whether it belong to the living or the dead, he sees him seized by the very parties who are leading away Christ. Ah, the two goats are now in the hands of the sacrificers, but will neither escape? will the typical

representation not find itself verified? It is a moment of intense anxiety. But all doubt should disappear, there should be nothing but conviction that Jesus, though He must die, would rise from the dead, rise as a conqueror, rise as a justifier, when the seeming inhabitant of the tomb bursts from those that would detain him, leaves the linen cloth, and flees away naked.

And thus the incident which has engaged our attention, is made to fill an important place as symbolical, or prophetic, of Christ's triumph over his enemies. It comes in at the very moment when it must have been most needed, when faith was put to its sorest trial, the Redeemer appearing to have fallen finally into the hands of the powers of darkness. It was, as we have seen, most strikingly significant of Christ's return from the grave—significant, moreover, through an exactness of correspondence with the types of the law: so that it addressed itself especially to those, who, conversant with the figures of the Mosaic dispensation, justly looked to find answerable realities in the actions and endurance of the promised Messiah. I look on this spectre-like figure, this scarcely earthly form habited in grave-clothes, as I would upon a prophet, mysteriously raised up to utter a prediction, at the moment when the prediction was most needed, and in the language which would be best understood by the hearers; a prediction of the resurrection of Jesus; a prediction, therefore, whose tenor was most nicely adapted to cheer his dispirited followers, and which, as being woven out of the symbols of the law, could hardly fail to carry with it its interpretation to those whom it addressed.

And on this view of the occurrence, there is something, we think, very memorable, in the order already mentioned, in which the Evangelist has catalogued events. It is immediately after the statement, "and they all forsook him and fled," that St. Mark gives the account of the young man's seizure and escape. Why had the disciples thus abandoned and fled from their Master, except that his apprehension by his enemies, and the apparent certainty of his being put to death, seemed to them destructive of all hope of his working out their deliverance, and proving Himself

the Messiah that was to reign over Israel? They took fright at the first outbreak of violence, so soon as there was any symptom of Christ's yielding to the wicked: whereas if they would but manfully have stood their ground a little while, they might have been strengthened by a revelation from above, and have learned to brave the ignominy of a moment's defeat, in the certainty of an everlasting triumph. For no sooner had they yielded to unbelief and cowardice, and forsaken their Lord, than there happened that significant occurrence on which we have been speaking, and which portrayed so powerfully, in figures corresponding to those of the law, that He who died for their offences would rise for their justification. They just missed, you see, the delivery of a most expressive and intelligible prophecy, the effect of which could hardly fail to have been the reassuring of their minds, and the arming them with confidence and hope for that season of affliction through which they had to pass. Oh, how often with ourselves may there be something of the like missing, as by a moment or a hairbreadth, of a gracious communication which would scatter our doubts, disperse our fears, and fill us with joyful expectation. We are so impatient, so little disposed to "wait upon the Lord," so ready to take to flight the instant an enemy comes in view, that often, very often it may be, we yield to despair, and give up all for lost, exactly when a little perseverance would have put us in possession of such manifestations of God's purpose as could hardly have failed to nerve for conflict, or strengthen for endurance. We forsake Christ, because He is in the hands of his enemies; when, if we would but hold by Him a while longer, God would show us Christ triumphing, leaving nothing but the linen-cloth in the grasp of his enemies, evidence of their utter defeat, and his glorious escape.

Let us take this lesson from the symbolical occurrence which has been under review—a lesson as to perseverance in duty, though in the face of dangers and difficulties. The supplies of God's grace are to be expected in the way of God's commands. The duty of the disciples was to have kept close to Christ: had they done this, God, as we now see, had prepared for them a typical revelation,

most nicely adapted to their confirmation and comfort: whereas, by shrinking from Christ, they lost the disclosure, and were punished by being left in darkness and dismay. In religion, as in war, there is nothing gained by cowardice: he who turns his back upon the enemy, and flees from the field, may indeed seem to have his life as his reward; but he might perhaps have had both his life and his honor had he stood to his colors; and, unable ever after to lift up his head, he had better have laid it at once amongst the heaps of the slain.

And in religion, if not in war, there is certainty, that if we persevere, we shall meet succors; if we retreat, retreat on worse dangers than we seek to avoid.

Persevere then in every duty without regard to the discouragement: the next onward step may bring you into comparative light; the least backward is sure to land you in thicker darkness. Ah, learn from the disciples: hastily forsaking Christ, they fled to mourn over disappointed hopes, over a leader in whom they could no longer trust, because He was Himself the prey of the wicked, "a very scorn and outcast:" but, had they kept firmly for a few moments longer at his side, they might have been confident, even whilst He hung on the cross, assured of finding his grave deserted, but with the linen cloth in it to prove that He was risen.

SERMON II.

THE FIRE ON THE SHORE.

"As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."—ST. JOHN, xxi. 9, 10.

These words form part of the account of what St. John speaks of as Christ's third manifestation of Himself "to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead." The most careless reader, perhaps, can hardly peruse the words, without feeling that there is something strange and mysterious in what they state. How came this fire of coals on this lonely shore? Who kindled it? Who laid out the provision, the fish, and the bread? If, as we can scarcely doubt, there were something symbolical or significant, in what thus met the disciples' view so soon as they were come to land, what are the truths, what the lessons, that were figuratively conveyed?

We have a great and difficult subject of discourse before us. We must proceed with caution, we must proceed

with prayer: the inspired historian adds no explanation; he gives nothing but the facts; but the facts would not have been written, except for our admonition and instruction: we are, therefore, to study them with all care, but at the same time, in simple dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, through which alone can the dark things of Scripture be made clear, and the intricate plain.

Let us begin with looking attentively at the foregoing parts of the narrative: these may greatly assist to a right understanding of the facts upon which we are specially to comment.

The chapter before us opens with the mention of the assembling of seven of our Lord's disciples on the coast of the Sea of Tiberias. The solemn interview which Christ had promised to grant to

his followers on the mountain in Galilee appears not to have yet taken place ; we may suppose that the disciples were waiting for the commission which they were then to receive : in the mean time they were at liberty, and, perhaps, even necessitated by want, to pursue their original occupations. Under these circumstances, St. Peter tells the other disciples of his intention of going a-fishing. They agree to accompany him : the seven embark together, and spend the night in fruitless toil, for they caught nothing. But when the morning came, there stood on the shore, one, at least, whom the disciples did not recognize, though it was none other than the risen Christ Himself. The boat being at no great distance from the shore, Christ could speak to the disciples ; and He accordingly inquired of them whether they had any meat ? On their answering, No, He directed them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and assured them they should find.

Though the disciples did not recognize their Master, there must have been something in the air and appearance of the speaker, which commanded their attention, and, perhaps, caused them to suspect who it was ; otherwise they would hardly have been prompt to obey a command which, after toiling all night in vain, they might have been disposed to consider as uttered either in ignorance or presumption. They however cast the net without hesitation, and immediately enclosed so great a multitude of fishes, that they were unable to draw it. This miracle—for they could scarcely fail at once to regard as miraculous, so sudden and large a draught of fishes, occurring at the moment when they were about to give up in despair—suggested that the stranger on the shore must be Jesus Himself ; the miracle, independently of its wonderfulness, was so similar in its nature and circumstances to that which had preceded the calling of Peter, that the dullest must have entertained a suspicion, if not a conviction, of the presence of the Saviour.

But it was the disciple whom Jesus loved—for affection is quicksighted—who first satisfied himself as to its being the Lord ; and on his telling this to Peter, that impetuous, but ardent disciple threw himself into the sea, that he might

hasten to the Master whom he had lately so fiercely denied, but to whom he now longed to give proof of a devotedness increased by the remembrance of his fall, and the graciousness of his forgiveness. The other disciples, acting with less vehemence, but equally desiring to be with their Lord, proceeded towards the land in their ship, dragging with them the net and its ponderous enclosure. And then it was, on their all reaching the shore—perhaps much at the same moment ; for Peter, in his impetuosity, may not have outstripped his brethren who took a more ordinary way of approaching their Lord—then it was that they found what is described in the text, the fire of coals, and provision for a repast.

The fire could hardly have been kindled by themselves over-night ; they had been absent many hours, and what they had lighted would have been extinguished. They appear, moreover, to have gone a-fishing from being in want of provision ; at all events, they would hardly have left fish behind them on the shore ; or, if they had, the fish which now stood ready for their meal could not have been that which their own hands had placed on the coals ; the supposition is preposterous, that they had lighted the fire before embarking, and laid fish upon it to cook whilst they were absent on the sea.

Besides, there is something peculiar in the way in which St. John mentions the fire and the provision. He is particular in noting that it was “ as soon as they were come to land ” that the disciples saw this fire of coals. It was the first object which met their eye on landing. There would have been nothing to mention, had this fire been only what they had themselves kindled over-night. And we may believe that the Evangelist is so careful in pointing out that the fire was seen at the instant of reaching the shore, on purpose to make us understand that the disciples did not light it after they landed, and that neither did they stir up the embers of the day before. You might have expected that the disciples would have been so engrossed with looking at their risen Master as to have had no eye for any other object. Neither would they have had, we may venture to believe, unless for something startling and mysterious. But that strange fire, kindled, as they may have

felt, by invisible hands, seems to have drawn off their attention even from Christ: it fixed their gaze as they set foot upon the shore, and, perhaps, like the burning-bush with Moses, helped to persuade them of the actual presence of Divinity.

And now you will observe, that, though there was all the material for a repast—angels, or the Redeemer Himself, having in their absence made ready the fish and the bread—Christ does not forthwith invite them to dine, but first of all—this is a very significant circumstance—directs them to bring of the fish which they had caught. Neither was this direction complied with in haste, a hand being thrust into the net, and some of the rich store transferred to the coals; there appears, on the contrary, to have been great deliberation: the net was drawn to land; the fish were counted, and found to be in number one hundred and fifty and three; and it was not till this had been done, and then, as we may conjecture, some of the newly-caught fish had been dressed, in addition to those already prepared, that our Lord bade his disciples partake of the meal provided for them by his supernatural power.

Such are the main circumstances of the narrative. You cannot fail to be impressed with the sense as of something strange and unearthly. You feel that, like Moses in Horeb, you must put off the shoes from your feet, ere you presume to approach the mysterious fire which seems to have been kindled in a moment; for the disciples saw it not till they had set foot upon the shore, though you might have expected it to have been visible during the night; come then, and let it be with all awe and humility, but nevertheless in the hope of instruction and comfort, that we gather with the disciples round this fire of coals, and endeavor to decipher the symbolical lessons which the whole transaction may have been designed to convey.

Now there are one or two suppositions which will present themselves to a thoughtful mind, and which deserve a passing notice, though they may be evidently incommensurate with the facts of the case. It may readily occur to you as one explanation of the kindled fire, and prepared repast, that Christ had been thinking kindly of his wearied and

hungry disciples; that, knowing how they had spent the night, and how much they would be in need of refreshment, He had graciously employed his power in making ready a meal, where, had they been left to themselves, they would have been utterly destitute. We need not exclude this explanation. We may believe that it was part of the purpose of our gracious and compassionate Lord, to supply the bodily wants of his followers, to provide fire to warm them, and food to satisfy them. But there is too much reason for regarding the miraculous draught of fishes, like every other miracle, as designed to serve for a parable, to allow of our being content with an interpretation of the text which would strip it of all figure, and reduce it into a mere evidence of the tender consideration of Christ for his people.

There is another explanation which may suggest itself, and which makes the whole transaction refer especially to St. Peter. It would certainly seem as if one great object of this manifestation of Christ, had been the publicly restoring to the Apostleship the disciple who had so shamefully denied Him, but whose repentance had been as bitter as his offence had been flagrant. You will remember, that, so soon as the dinner was over, Christ addressed Peter with the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me, more than these?" And when Peter had replied, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," Christ said unto him, "Feed my lambs." This was, as it were, the reinvesting Peter with the pastoral office, of which he might justly be thought to have stripped himself, when he basely, and with an oath, declared that he belonged not to Christ. But Peter denied his Master thrice; and thrice did Christ now propose the same question; and, receiving the same answer, thrice did He deliver the same charge of feeding the flock. As if Peter had thrice lost the Apostleship, by thrice denying Christ, Christ thrice restored to him the office, that he himself, and the other Apostles, might have no doubt as to his having been forgiven, and, as it were, reordained. And when our Lord had thus publicly reinvested Peter with the Apostleship, he proceeded to prophesy "by what death he should glorify God;" so that almost the whole of this interview, as far as it is

recorded by the Evangelist, was occupied with matters personal to St. Peter, as though it had been on his account, or for his sake, that Christ showed Himself the third time to his disciples.

But how does the mode, or character of the manifestation agree with the supposition of its having been granted with an especial view to St. Peter, to his public reinvestment with the pastoral office? Most accurately; for when Simon Peter was first called by Christ, called that is,—for there had been previous intercourse,—to forsake his worldly occupation, and devote himself to the preaching of the Gospel, Christ wrought, as you will remember, a miracle precisely similar, in its nature and circumstances, to that recorded in the narrative which we have under review. Simon Peter, and his partners, were then in a ship on the sea of Gennesareth. They had then toiled all night, and taken no fish. At the bidding of Christ, they then also let down the net; and the result then also was, that immediately “they enclosed a great multitude of fishes.” And then it was that, Simon Peter being overcome by the miracle, Christ separated him for the office, to which he afterwards gave a more solemn appointment, saying, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

So that there could not well be a more accurate correspondence than between the mode in which Christ prepared for Peter’s first ordination, and that in which he made way for the re-ordaining him after his calamitous fall. It can hardly be imagined but that the similarity of the miracle must have painfully forced itself on the attention of St. Peter, bringing back to the mind of the penitent disciple the happy occasion on which he had forsaken all that he might follow our Lord, and perhaps suggesting how deplorably he had since altered his position, through overweening confidence in his own stedfastness and courage.

But whilst there was thus what we might call a repetition of the whole matter of Peter’s ordination, what had “the fire of coals” to do with the transaction? It is this of which we chiefly seek the purport or design; and it does not appear how it served, or contributed, to the supposed object of this third manifestation of Christ.

But we consider that Christ caused a miraculous draught of fishes, to remind Peter how He had called him originally, and to produce in him a sorrowing remembrance of his grievous apostasy. Christ will not solemnly reinvest Peter with the pastoral office, till He has made him again and deeply feel his heinous offence. And the miracle of the draught of fishes will have caused Peter much compunction and bitterness of soul—reminding him of what Christ had done for him, it must have reminded him also, and that too like the piercings of a sword, of his ingratitude and cowardice. But the sad facts of his denial of his Lord require to be yet more vividly brought back to his mind, that he may, through the painful recollections, be yet better fitted for reinstatement in his office. And might not “the fire of coals” help in a measure to recal the painful act of apostasy? Thus much is certain, that the expression, “a fire of coals,” occurs only in one other place in the New Testament, as though this were not the ordinary sort of fire, and the Evangelist wished especially to mark of what it was made. And it is the same Evangelist, St. John, who uses the word on the two occasions; St. John, whose great object in writing his Gospel appears to have been to supply the omissions of the preceding historians. But what is the other occasion on which St. John mentions “a fire of coals?” It is when he is relating what took place in the palace of the high priest, after Jesus had been apprehended, and brought before Caiaphas. “And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals (for it was cold); and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.”

It was, then, whilst he stood by this “fire of coals,” that Peter denied his blessed Lord and Master. It was whilst he stood by this fire of coals that Christ threw on him that look which painting never caught, and which, following on the crowing of the cock, caused him to go forth and weep bitterly. Was not, then, “a fire of coals,” found mysteriously kindled by unknown hands on the shores of the lake, likely to recall to Peter the circumstances of his apostasy? It were hard to believe, that, painfully affected as he must al-

ready have been by the miracle of the fishes, he could have looked on that strange fire, produced to all appearance by another miracle of Christ, and not have had all the scene in the high priest's palace brought back upon him with a sort of crushing power. Again is he standing as he stood on that fatal night, and again he meets the look, which, more terrible in its meek reproachfulness than the fiercest glance of indignation and vengeance, convicted him of apostasy, and convulsed him with remorse. So that the "fire of coals," so pointedly mentioned by the Evangelist, who alone of the sacred historians, had recorded of what the fire was made in the high priest's hall, helps to complete the series of symbolical facts, if you suppose the manifestation of Christ, on the occasion before us, to have been granted with a view specially to the reordination of St. Peter. On this supposition, you are to consider that our blessed Redeemer, graciously designing, by a triple commission which should correspond to the triple denial, to restore His disciple to the pastoral office, so arranged the circumstances of His manifestation of Himself as to fix Peter's attention on the Apostleship with which he had been honored, and on the apostasy by which he had deserved to forfeit it altogether. Nothing could be better constructed to fix his attention on the apostleship than a miracle most accurately resembling that which had first moved him to forsake all and follow Christ; and, accordingly, after another night of fruitless toil, the net is again ordered to be cast into the sea, and again incloses a huge multitude of fishes. But how, upon this wild sea-shore, is he to be forcibly reminded of his apostasy? What shall people that shore with recollections of the scene of disaster and shame? Nay, if it was by "a fire of coals" that the recreant Apostle stood when he thrice denied his Lord, and if "a fire of coals" were among the last things to be looked for on the solitary coast, it might be hard to say what could have been better fitted than a "fire of coals" to fill Peter with a remembrance of his terrible fall. Oh it must have been to him as though there thronged up from the past the taunting questions of the servants, and his own fierce execrations,

and the shrill crowing of the cock, and the piercing subduing look of his Lord, when, so soon as he was come to land, he "saw a fire of coals there," lighted he knew not how, but for what he could not doubt.

But whilst we think that such an explanation agrees admirably with many of the circumstances of the case, and is replete with interest and instruction, we cannot give it you as in every respect satisfactory. Indeed, it manifestly does not meet the whole of the facts. It gives no account of the preparations which had been made for a repast, nor of the reckoning up the fish, nor of the directing that certain of the fish just caught should be dressed in addition to those already prepared—a significant circumstance beyond doubt; for He who had miraculously provided a certain quantity, and laid it on the coals, as if to await the landing of the disciples, might undoubtedly have caused that this certain quantity should be enough, and that there should be no need for waiting till a portion of the fresh draught were dressed. We have still, then, to seek an explanation which shall satisfy all parts of the narrative: and this, we think, is to be found in the progress of the Gospel, and the connection between the old and new dispensations.

In one of our Lord's parables, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a net, which, being cast into the sea, "gathered of every kind;" so that we may be said to have Christ's own authority for considering that the miraculous draught of fishes represented the bringing of multitudes into the Church through the instrumentality of the preachers of the Gospel. It is observable also that Simon Peter is said to have drawn the net to land: there may have been a reference here to the fact, that, in reward of his noble confession of Christ, Peter was entrusted with the opening the Church to the Gentiles: he it was, who, instructed by a vision from God, admitted by baptism Cornelius and his friends to the privileges of Christianity. For there can be no doubt, that in this second miraculous draught of fishes, there was a special reference to the combining of all nations in the visible Church. The number of fishes is to be carefully noted;

an hundred and fifty and three; and so also is the remark of the Evangelist, "And for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." As to the number, it appears that one hundred and fifty and three was exactly the number of kinds, or varieties of fish then known; so that we may most justly conclude that the number was an indication that persons of all nations and conditions should enter into the Church. And then the remark as to the net not being broken, though it inclosed so many fish, must be considered as prophetic of the capacity of the Christian Church; unlike the Jewish, which was not constructed for enlargement and extension, the Christian Church might embrace the ends of the earth, and not be overcharged, whatever the multitude and variety of converts. So far, there is little difficulty in assigning the parabolic character of the narrative before us; every one may readily follow the facts, and be aware of their typical import.

But, now, we come again to the "fire of coals," and the prepared repast—what truths did these symbolically teach, when taken, as they must be, in immediate connection with the other figurative facts? My brethren, you are to observe and remember, that the Jewish and the Christian dispensations are not so truly distinct and detached economies, as component parts of one great plan and arrangement. There have never been two ways in which sinners might be saved: in the Old Testament, as in the New, "everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man." In the New Testament, indeed, we have the clearer exposition of the great scheme of mercy: God's wondrous purpose of saving the Church through the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son is there set forth with a fulness and precision, which it were vain to seek in the writings of the Old. Nevertheless, there is no difference whatsoever in the doctrine propounded, but only in the measure of its revelation; and, however great the change which was made through the coming of Christ, when external distinctions were swept away, and life and immortality especially brought to light, there still went on the original process for the deliverance

of the fallen race of man. The process was but continued, though with less of veil and obscurity; and they who were the first inclosed within what might in strictness be styled the Gospel net, were caught—to keep up the metaphor—within the same meshes, and drawn to shore through the same instrumentality, as men of olden times, the righteous who obtained eternal life by the assistance of the patriarchal, or of the legal dispensation.

But let us see whether this great truth may not have been figuratively taught by the facts of which we are endeavoring to find an explanation. There was already a fire kindled, when the Apostles dragged to shore the net which specially represented the Christian Church, the Church, that is, as it was to subsist in its expanded form, subsequently to the coming of Christ. And on the fire which was thus burning, there were fish already laid: yea, and the first direction to the Apostles was that they should bring of the fish which had just been caught, and add them to those which were already on the coals. Now, since by the fish of all kinds which the net inclosed, we are undoubtedly to understand the members of the Church, under the Gospel dispensation, ought we not to understand, by the fish already on the coals, the members of the Church under the Jewish dispensation? This is nothing but preserving, or keeping up the metaphor. If the fish just caught represented the converts that would be made by the preaching of the Gospel, the fish which had been caught before, and not by those who now drew the net to land, may—we should rather say, must—represent those of whom the Church had been composed during the ministrations of the law. So that the visible Church before Christ was figured by the fish already on the coals, the visible Church after Christ by the fish just inclosed in the net; and when the newly-caught fish were placed on the same fire with those which had been previously secured, was it not shown that the visible Church, before and after the coming of Christ, was virtually but one and the same? that its members, at whatever time they lived, had to be brought to the same altar, and to be purified by the same flame? I know not why we should not think that that strange

fire, mysteriously kindled on the lonely shore, was typical of the propitiatory work of the Redeemer, through whom alone the men of any age can be presented as a sacrifice acceptable unto God. We have all to be laid upon an altar; we have all, as it were, to be subjected to the action of fire: but there is no altar but the one Mediator, and no fire but that of his one great oblation, which will answer for those who seek to consecrate themselves, a whole burnt offering, to their Creator in heaven.

And what could be a more lively parable of this fact, than that, just before his departure from earth, when standing on the margin of the sea, the separating-line, so to speak, between time and eternity, Christ caused an altar to rise, mysterious as Himself—for no human hands reared it,—and crowned it with burning coals, which had not been kindled by any earthly flame; and then brought about that there should be placed on this sacred and significant fire representatives of the one visible Church, as it had subsisted before his incarnation, and as it was to subsist till He should come the second time to judgment?

It seems to have been a lesson peculiarly needed by the Apostles, that they were but following up the labors of the men of earlier times; that they were not to consider themselves as going forth on a new mission, of which no notices had been previously issued; but rather as charged with the fresh proclamation of truths which had been continuously, though more obscurely, announced. There was naturally great likelihood that the first preachers of Christianity, having to publish the wondrous and startling facts of Christ's birth, and death, and resurrection, would overlook the close connection between the old and the new dispensation. Accordingly Christ had forcibly reminded them of it when He said, "Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." And now he repeats something of the same lesson, conveying it, not through words, but through expressive emblems or figures. He gives them a miraculous draught of fishes: and for-

asmuch as He had before, in a parable, likened the kingdom of heaven to a net which gathered of all kinds, they would naturally consider these fishes as representing the converts to the Christian religion. But they were not to suppose that these converts formed a separate body, or were to be saved by different means, from the servants of God under earlier dispensations. The Church in all ages was one, and one also was the mode of deliverance. How shall this be shown, so as to keep up the lesson, or rather the emblem of the net and the draught? Indeed, whether the Apostles understood it or not at the first, we may venture to say that the truths, that there had never been but one altar for the sinful, never but one cleansing, consecrating flame, and that the righteous, however separated by time, and by external ordinances and privileges, had communion and fellowship in one and the same mystic body,—that these truths could not have been more significantly exhibited to them, nor more consistently with the emblem of the miraculous draught, than when, "so soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread," and received immediately this direction from Christ, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."

Now it can hardly be said that there is any part of the remarkable transaction before us which does not thus find a consistent interpretation. It is true, indeed, that we have made no observation on there having been bread as well as fish already provided; whereas the Evangelist is careful in noting it, and in afterwards mentioning that our Lord took of both, of the bread and the fish, and gave to his disciples. But we may readily allow that different ends were subserved by the same series of facts: it is never required, in the interpretation of a parable, whether delivered in word or by action, that every minute particular should be made to shadow forth a truth. When we interpreted the facts with a special reference to the case of St. Peter, we had no use to make either of the fish, or of the bread: but we do not on that account conclude that the fire of coals might not have been instrumental, or might not have been designed as instrumental, to the recalling to the Apostle the cir-

circumstances of his fearful apostasy. In like manner, if there be no special significance in the bread, when the narrative is applied to the shadowing out the progress of the Gospel, and the oneness of the Church under various dispensations, we do not think this any objection to the fitness of the application: we suppose that the refreshment of the wearied disciples was one of the purposes for which the fire had been kindled, and the food prepared; and there was use for the bread in regard of this purpose, if not of any other.

Though it would not be hard to believe that the fish and the bread were combined with a higher intent. Christ, you will remember, had fed a great multitude with a few loaves and fishes, typifying how the truths and doctrines of his religion should suffice for the spiritual sustenance of the world. The disciples would naturally be reminded of this miracle, when Jesus again took bread and fish, and distributed amongst them—reminded too (and what parting lesson could be more important?) that the food which Christ delivered to them as spiritual pastors, would be an abundant provision for the men of all ages and countries.

But, now, considering that a sufficient and consistent interpretation has been assigned to the several parts of the narrative before us, we would show you, in conclusion, into how beautiful an allegory some of the facts may be wrought, when a broader view is taken, one which shall more distinctly comprehend ourselves. We would not, indeed, claim, for what we have now to advance, the character of an explanation, or interpretation, of the significative circumstances—it is at best but an accommodation of the parable: but when a portion of Scripture has been expounded, as if relating rather to others than to ourselves, it is both lawful and useful to search for some personal application, that we may feel our own interest, and find our own profit, in the passage reviewed.

It is a natural and appropriate simile which likens life to a voyage, a voyage which has variety of terminations—sometimes in calm, sometimes in storm; the vessel, in one case, casting anchor in placid waters, so that the spirit has but, if we may use the expression, to

step gently ashore; in another, suffering shipwreck, so that there is fearful strife and peril in escaping from the waves. We shall all reach the shore of another world: for though some may be said to be thrown violently on that shore, whilst others are landed on it, as though by the kind ministry of angels, none can perish as if existence might terminate at death; of all it will have to be said, as of those with St. Paul in the ship, some by swimming, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, "it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."

And there is something of a delineation of this variety of modes of death, in Peter's struggling through the water, whilst the other disciples approach the shore in their boat. Peter's is the violent death, the death of the martyr; but his companions find a gentler dismissal from the flesh; theirs is the natural death, death with fewer of the accompaniments which invest the last act with terror and awfulness. Yet, die when we will, and how we will, there is a mysteriousness about the moment of dissolution, which must cause it to be expected with some measure of fear and apprehension. The passing in that moment from time to eternity—the becoming in that instant a disembodied spirit, a naked, unclothed soul, launched upon an unknown scene, with none of the instruments heretofore employed for the ingathering of knowledge, or the communication of thought—oh, who ever marked, so far as it can be marked, the noiseless flitting away of man's immortal part, without experiencing a painful inquisitiveness as to what had become of that part, as to where it was, as to what it saw, as to what it heard? There may be a thorough assurance that the soul has gone to be with the Lord; but whilst this destroys all anxiety on its account, it does not, cannot, repress the striving of the mind to follow it in its flight, the intense gaze at the folds of the veil which hangs between the present world and the future, as if it must have been so far withdrawn for the admission of the spirit just freed from flesh, that some glimpse might be caught by the watchful of the unexplored region beyond.

But in vain this striving of the mind, this intenseness of the gaze. Whilst

we live, it is as an infinite desert, which no thought can traverse, that separates the two worlds; though, when we come to die, it will be found but a line, like that which the last wave leaves on a sandy shore. Let it satisfy us, in the meanwhile, that whatever the mode in which the soul of the righteous is dismissed—whether that mode be imaged in Peter's casting himself into the sea, and struggling to the land, or whether it be represented in the quieter approachings of the boat with the other disciples—the soul will find preparation, as it were, for its reception: Christ stands upon the shore, expecting his faithful servants; and of all of them it will have to be said, in the words of our text, "As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." Oh, this may well shadow out, what we have abundant warrant for believing from more express statements of Scripture, that, to the faithful in Christ, the moment of being detached from the body is the moment of being admitted into happiness. "As soon as they were come to land"—no delay, no interval—all that was needed was found ready; the fire kindled, and the banquet spread.

Yet who doubts that the righteous will not only find the material of happiness prepared, but that they will carry with them, so to speak, additions to that

material, and make heaven all the richer and the brighter by their arrival? It is "the communion of saints;" and whilst each saint shall draw cause of rapture from those who have gone before, they also shall draw cause of rapture from him. Ah, then, how beautifully apposite the direction, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." The banquet, the marriage-supper of the Lamb, shall be furnished from the contributions of every generation; all that any man, in any age, has been enabled to accomplish in works of righteousness and faith, every spiritual battle won, every convert made, shall be mingled in that vast store of happiness, of which the glorified Church shall everlastingly partake.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." They "rest from their labors," in that, as soon as they come to land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread: "their works do follow them," in that they are then bidden to bring of the fish which they have caught. Oh, that we may all so labor during life, that hereafter, when judged, as we must be, by our works, there may be found, not indeed—what can never be—a claim to the happiness of heaven, but an evidence of our having loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth.

SERMON III.

THE FINDING THE GUEST-CHAMBER.

* And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.—ST. MARK, xiv. 13, 14, 15.

The time was now at hand when our Lord was to complete, by the sacrifice of Himself, the great work for which He had taken upon Him our nature. He had wrought miracle upon miracle, in evidence of a divine commission; and He had delivered discourse upon discourse, in illustration of the dispensation which he had come to introduce. But without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin; and all his actions, and sermons, had been but preparatory to a wondrous and fearful occurrence, the surrender of Himself to the will of his enemies, to the death of a malefactor.

The disciples should have been aware—for Christ gave them frequent warning—that the time of separation from their Master was almost arrived, and that the separation would be effected in a manner most trying to their faith. Yet they appear to have closed their eyes, in a great degree, to the coming events: after all which had been done to prepare them, they were taken by surprise, and seemed as bewildered and confounded by what befel Christ, as though He had not, in the most express terms, forewarned them of his crucifixion and burial. This arose from their unbelief and hardness of heart: they had not yet divested themselves of the thought and hope of a temporal kingdom; and, whatever the process by which they contrived to explain away, or hide from themselves, the clear statements of our Lord, it is manifest that they had virtually no expectation that Christ would be nailed to the cross,

and that his dying this shameful death passed with them as well-nigh a proof, that He could not be the deliverer promised unto Israel.

But it is beautiful to observe what pains, so to speak, were taken by the compassionate Savior to fortify the disciples, to arm them for the approaching days of temptation and disaster. We have at other times shown you how this tender consideration for his followers may be traced in the arrangements which He made for his last entry into Jerusalem, in accomplishment of the prophecy of Zechariah, that her King should come to Zion, sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. It was in a strange and circuitous way that Christ provided Himself with the animal on which He was to ride. He sent two of his disciples to a particular spot, informing them that they should there find an ass and a colt. He directed them to take possession of these animals, and lead them away, as though they had been their own. He furnished them with certain words, in reply to any remonstrance which the owners might make, and assured them that these words would induce the owners to part with their property. How singular, how intricate a mode of obtaining, what probably would have been brought Him, had He merely mentioned his wish to any one in the multitude. But was there not good reason for his preferring this circuitous method? We may be sure there was; even as, when the tribute money had to be paid, there was good reason for his sending Peter

to the sea, and making him find the piece of money in the mouth of the fish which he first caught, in place of producing, as He might have done, the money at once, divesting the miracle of all intricate accompaniments. And there is no difficulty in assigning reasons for the method which our Lord took to procure the humble equipage of which He had need. The foreknowledge which He displayed as to mean and inconsiderable things, such as the ass and her colt; the influence which, though at a distance, He put forth upon the owners, inducing them to part with their property,—these surely were calculated to convince the disciples (and upon no point, at that moment, had they greater need of assurance) that Christ would have his eye upon them in their poverty and distress, and that his not being visibly present, would in no degree interfere with his power of subduing his enemies, and sustaining his friends.

But our Lord was not content with having, in this signal instance, furnished his followers with such evidences of his prescience and power, as were most adapted to prepare them for the oncoming trial. In the course of a very few days, and when the time of his crucifixion was close at hand, He took a similar roundabout way of obtaining what He needed, with the intent, as we may believe, of again impressing on the disciples the truths which would best support them in their approaching tribulation. Our Lord was now in Bethany, in the confines of Jerusalem, awaiting the final act of rejection by the Jews. The first day of the feast of unleavened bread having arrived, the disciples came to Him, saying, "Where wilt thou that we go and prepare, that thou mayest eat the passover?" This was a very simple question, supposing, as was undoubtedly the case, that Christ had determined in what house he would partake of the last supper with his followers. And He might have delivered a very simple answer, indicating the street in the city, and the name of the householder. This is what would most naturally have been done under ordinary circumstances, but our Lord, as you will observe, took a wholly different course. In place of a simple answer, He gave the most complicated directions. He tells his disciples to go

into the city, mentioning no particular quarter, but bidding them proceed till they should meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow this man—not to speak to him, with the view of ascertaining whether he were the right person to follow—but to follow him, and to enter any house into which he might go. They were then to accost the master of this house—not, as it would appear, the same person as they had been following—but they were to accost him without ceremony, in an abrupt manner, as making a claim, rather than as preferring a request. "The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" Christ assured his messengers, that, upon this, a large upper room would be shown them, "furnished and prepared." Thus, accordingly, it came to pass. We read in the next verse, "His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them."

But you can hardly read of so intricate a way of doing a simple thing, and not ask—as in regard of the mode of obtaining the ass and the colt—why did our Lord take so roundabout a method? why did He not go more directly to his end? We may be sure that there were good reasons: these reasons, we may believe, are still to be found in the circumstances of the disciples, and in the desire of Christ to strengthen them for the trial which was now close at hand; and we invite you to an attentive survey of the several particulars specified in our text, that you may the better judge whether it was not with a wise and tender regard for those from whom He was so soon to be separated, that Jesus, in place of sending Peter and John direct to the house where He designed to eat the passover, bade them go into the city, and look out for, and follow, "a man bearing a pitcher of water."

Now, let the preparation have been ever so labored and explicit, it cannot be denied that it was a great trial of faith which the disciples were about to undergo, in beholding their Master given up to the wiles of his enemies, and in being themselves exposed to fierce persecution. Even had they thoroughly understood, and apprehended, the predictions of Christ in regard of his own

betrayal and death, it could not have been other than a terrible shock, a shock calculated to overthrow all but the very firmest trust, when the powers of darkness seemed to triumph, and evil angels, and evil men, prevailed against righteousness. It must then have been a great thing for the disciples, that faith should be kept in exercise up to the very time when so vast a demand was to be made upon its energies; for, assuredly, in proportion as faith was left inactive till summoned to face the shame of the cross, would be the likelihood of its then giving way, as not having been practised in lesser encounters. Faith, like other powers, is strengthened through use; and every believer must feel, that if, after a long period of comparative peace and security, he is suddenly met by an extraordinary onset of trial, there is much greater risk of his being confounded and overborne, than if the extraordinary onset were to come after a lengthened series of less virulent assaults. The spiritual arm, as well as the bodily, becomes fitted for encounter with the giant, through frequent encounters with formidable, but not as formidable, adversaries; though either, if exposed, without this previous discipline, to a contest with Goliath of Gath, might prove wholly insufficient, and give way at once, having scarce attempted the battle. It was after having met the lion and the bear, that David went forth to meet the uncircumcised Philistine.

And we might expect that Christ, knowing to how great effort the faith of his followers was about to be called, would, in his compassionate earnestness for their welfare, keep their faith in exercise up to the moment of the dreaded separation. He would find, or make occasions for trying and testing the principles which were soon to be brought to so stern a proof. Did He do this? and how did he do it? We regard the circumstances which are now under review, those connected with the finding the guest-chamber in which the last supper might be eaten, as an evidence and illustration of Christ's exercising the faith of his disciples.

Was it not exercising the faith of Peter and John—for these, the more distinguished of the disciples, were employed on the errand—to send them into the city with such strange and desul-

tory directions? How natural for them to have said, why not tell us at once the house to which we are to go? we shall perhaps meet a dozen men, each bearing a pitcher of water; we are as likely to follow the wrong as the right; and as to entering a stranger's house, and abruptly requiring him to show us the guest-chamber, how improbable is it that we shall meet with any thing but insult, insult which will really be deserved, considering that we shall have taken an inexcusable liberty. There were so many chances, if the word may be used, against the guest-chamber being found through the circuitous method prescribed by our Lord, that we could not have wondered, had Peter and John shown reluctance to obey his command. And we do not doubt that what are called the chances, were purposely multiplied by Christ, to make the finding the room seem more improbable, and therefore to give faith the greater exercise. It could be no unusual thing for a man to be carrying a pitcher of water—Christ might have given some more remarkable sign. But it was its not being remarkable which made place for faith. Again, there would have been risk enough of mistake or repulse, in accosting the man with the pitcher; but this man was only to be followed; and he might stop at many houses before he reached the right; and the master of the house might be from home—how many contingencies might have been avoided, if Christ would but have given more explicit directions. But Christ would not be more explicit, because, in proportion as He had been more explicit, there would have been less exercise for faith.

And if you imagine that, after all, it was no great demand on the faith of Peter and John, that they should go on so vague an errand—for that much did not hinge on their finding the right place, and they had but to return, if any thing went wrong—we are altogether at issue with you. I have no hesitation in maintaining, that any one of you would have been loath to go into Jerusalem for such a purpose, and with such directions; ay, more loath than to undertake some signal enterprise, manifestly requiring high courage and fortitude. There was something that looked degrading and ignoble in the errand—

men who could work miracles, and who had been with Christ when transfigured, being sent to look about the streets for a man bearing a pitcher of water, and to enter a stranger's house where they were only likely to meet rudeness.

And the apparent meanness of an employment will often try faith more than its apparent difficulty; the exposure to ridicule and contempt will require greater moral nerve than the exposure to danger and death. How should it be otherwise, when genuine humility is among the hardest things to acquire and maintain: and when, consequently, whatsoever goes directly to the mortifying pride will more touch men to the quick, than any amount of effort, or of sacrifice, round which may be thrown something of a lofty or chivalrous aspect? Oh, do not tell us of great faith as required only for the following Christ bearing his cross—there was great faith required also for the following the man bearing the pitcher. Tell us not of its being a hard task to go in unto Pharaoh, and to say, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go;" it was a hard task also to go in unto the stranger, and say, "Thus saith the Master, Where is the guest-chamber?"

We believe that it is very frequently ordered that faith should be disciplined and nurtured for its hardest endurances, and its highest achievements, through exposure to petty inconveniences, collisions with mere rudeness, the obloquy of the proud, the sneer of the supercilious, and the incivility of the ignorant. Men have looked wonderingly, as some unflinching confessor, some candidate for the bloody crown of martyrdom, has stepped forth from ranks which had only simple duties to discharge, and common trials to face, and displayed a constancy, and a courage, surpassing those exhibited by Christians trained in higher schools of experience. But they have forgotten, or they have not known, that no where is faith so well disciplined as in humble occupations, that it grows great through little tasks, and may be more exercised by being kept to the menial business of a servant, than by being summoned to the lofty standing of a leader. They have forgotten, or they have not known, that the uncourteous repulses, the ungracious slights, the contemptuous insults, to which a

Christian may be exposed in acting out his Christianity in every-day life, and amid the most common-place circumstances, put his principles to severe proof, or keep them in full work; and that the very fact of his having moved in so humble a sphere, and been plied with trials so unostentatious and petty, has had a direct tendency to the hardening him for conflict, ay, though it might be with "principalities and powers."

And it seems to us that Christ was practically teaching, and illustrating all this, in the course which he took with his disciples, as the time of their great trial drew near. We may justly assume that He sought to prepare them for this trial, that it was his object to keep their faith exercised, that the likelihood might be less of its giving way at the last. And his method of exercise was by employing them on errands which threatened to be fruitless, and seemed to be degrading. Five days before his crucifixion, He sends two disciples to look for an ass and a colt, where they were perhaps little likely to be found, and to remove them at the risk of being regarded as robbers, and therefore treated with insult or violence. And now two days before his crucifixion, He sends two disciples to find him a place where He may celebrate the passover; but He seems to take pains, not only to avoid the being simple in his directions, but to make those directions involve as many probabilities as possible of what would be irksome and unpleasant, as much exposure as possible to mistake, repulse, contempt—the very things from which men are most ready to shrink—for He bids his disciples walk the city till they meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, follow that man, enter any house into which he might go, and accost the master of the house with the unceremonious message, "The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"

We should, however, be taking only a contracted view of the circumstances before us, if we considered them merely with reference to an exercise of faith, as though Christ's only object had been the disciplining his disciples for the shame of the cross, by employing them on errands from which their pride would revolt. That this was one great object,

we think it lawful to infer, as well from the nature of the case, as from the resemblance of the proceeding to that which had occurred but three days before, when the two disciples were dispatched for the ass and the colt. You can hardly fail to admit, that the same principle must have been at work in the two cases—so similarly are the chances of mistake and repulse multiplied, and, with these, the chances of insult; our Lord is evidently carrying on a system, a system, if we may use the expression, of humiliating errands, as though He would thereby prepare his followers to face persecution in its more awful forms.

And we do earnestly desire of you to bear this in mind; for men, who are not appointed to great achievements and endurance, are very apt to feel as though there were not enough, in the trials and duties of a lowly station, for the nurture and exercise of high Christian graces. Whereas, if it were by merely following a man bearing a pitcher of water that Apostles were trained for the worst onsets of evil, there may be no such school for the producing strong faith as that in which the lessons are of the most every-day kind. It is a remarkable saying of our blessed Lord, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." "Take up his cross daily"—then there is a cross to be borne every day: the cross is not to be carried only on great occasions; the cross is to be carried daily: a true Christian will find the cross, nay, cannot miss the cross, in the events, the duties, the trials, of every day—else how is he to "take up his cross daily?" how to follow Christ daily? Ah, we are too apt to think that taking up the cross, and following Christ, are singular things, things for peculiar seasons and extraordinary circumstances. Let us learn, and let us remember, that, on the contrary, they may, they must, be of every day occurrence; and let it serve to explain how they may be of daily occurrence, that, when Christ would school his disciples to face the perils of following Him as He ascended Mount Calvary, He set them to face the unpleasantness of following a man bearing a pitcher of water.

But there is more than this to be said in regard of the complicated way in

which Christ directed his disciples to the guest-chamber where He had determined to eat the last supper. He was not only exercising the faith of the disciples, by sending them on an errand which seemed unnecessarily intricate, and to involve great exposure to insult and repulse—He was giving strong evidence of his thorough acquaintance with every thing that was to happen, and of his power over the minds whether of strangers or of friends. In proportion as there seemed a great many chances against the right room being found by the disciples, was the proof, as you must all admit, when the room was nevertheless found, that the prescience, or foreknowledge, of Christ extended to minute or inconsiderable particulars. You must consider it as a prophecy, on the part of Christ, that the man would be met, bearing a pitcher of water; that, if followed, he would enter the right house; that the master of this house, on being asked by the disciples, would show them "a large upper-room furnished and prepared," where they might make ready for the eating the passover. But it was a prophecy of no ordinary kind. It was a prophecy which seemed to take delight in putting difficulties in the way of its own precise accomplishment. It would not have been accomplished by the mere finding the house—it would have been defeated, had the house been found through any other means than the meeting the man, or had the man been discovered through any other sign than the pitcher of water: yea, and it would have been defeated, defeated in the details, which were given, as it might have seemed, with such unnecessary and perilous minuteness, if the master of the house had made the least objection, or if it had not been an upper-room which he showed the disciples, or if that room had not been large, or if it had not been furnished and prepared. If Christ had merely sent the disciples to a particular house, telling them that they would there find a guest-chamber, there might, or there might not have been prophecy; the master of the house might have been one of Christ's adherents, and Christ might previously have held with Him some private communication, arranging for the celebration of the passover. But our Lord put it beyond controversy

that there was no pre-arranged scheme, but that He was distinctly exercising his own prophetic power, by making the whole thing turn on the meeting a man with a pitcher of water. For though you may say that this might have been part of a plot or confederacy, our Lord having agreed with the householder that his servant should be standing, with a particular burden, at a particular place, and at a particular time, yet, surely, on the least reflection, you must allow that no sagacious person, who had thought it worth while to make a plot at all, would have made one so likely to be defeated—for what more likely than that, in the streets of a crowded city, several persons would be met, about the same time, with so common a thing as a pitcher of water? or than that the disciples, loitering a little on the road, or going a different way, would just miss the encounter on which the whole thing depended?

The supposition of any thing of plot, or confederacy, is excluded by the commonness of the specified occurrences; and then, on the other hand, this very commonness should serve to make what must have been prophecy all the more wonderful; for to be able to foresee, with most perfect distinctness, that the man would be met, that the disciples would follow the right person, that they would be taken to the right house, that they would be shown the right room—nay, you may speak of the marvellousness of foreseeing an empire's rise, or an empire's fall; but there might really be greater scope for the keen conjecture, or the sagacious guess, of a farsighted man, in the probable revolutions of states, than in the pitcher of water, and the furnished guest-chamber.

And whatever tended to prove to the disciples their Master's thorough acquaintance with every future contingency, ought to have tended to the preparing them for the approaching days of disaster and separation. For how could they think that any thing, which was about to happen to Christ, would happen by chance, without having been accurately foreknown by Him, and fore-ordained, when He showed that his presence extended to such inconsiderable particulars as were involved in the errand on which they had been sent? And what right had they to be stagger-

ed by what befel Christ, if nothing befel Him which He had not expected, and for which He had not provided? If He foresaw the man with the pitcher, He must have foreseen Himself with the cross—and surely, if He thoroughly foreknew what was coming upon Him, this very circumstance should have sufficed to prove Him more than human; and, if more than human, what was there to be staggered at in the shame of his cross?

Besides, it was beautifully adapted to the circumstances of the disciples, that Christ showed that his foreknowledge extended to trifles. These disciples were likely to imagine, that, being poor and mean persons, they should be overlooked by Christ, when separated from them, and, perhaps, exalted to glory. And the showing them that his eye was on the movements of the Roman governor, or on the secret gatherings of the Pharisees, would not have sufficed to prevent, or destroy, this imagination; for Pilate and the Pharisees occupied prominent places, and might be expected to fix Christ's attention. But that his eye was threading the crowded thoroughfares of the city, that it was noting a servant with a pitcher of water, observing accurately when this servant left his master's house, when he reached the well, and when he would be at a particular spot on his way back—ah, this was not merely wonderful foreknowledge; this was foreknowledge applying itself to the insignificant and unknown: Peter and John might have obtained little comfort from Christ's proving to them that He watched a Cæsar on the throne; but it ought to have been surprisingly cheering to them, his proving that He watched a poor slave at the fountain.

Then, again, observe that whatever power was here put forth by Christ, was put forth without his being in contact with the party on whom it was exerted. Had He gone Himself to the householder, and in person demanded the accommodation which He needed, the result might have been ascribed to his presence; there was no resisting, it might have been said, one whose word was always "with power." Whereas, the householder surrendered his property on the strength of the message, "The Master saith," as the owners had surrendered the ass and the colt, on be-

ing told, "The Lord hath need of them." Christ acted, that is, upon parties who were at a distance from Him, thus giving incontrovertible proof, that his visible presence was not necessary in order to the exercise of his power. What a comfort should this have been to the disciples, informing and assuring them that Christ's removal from them would in no degree interfere with his protection and guardianship; if from Bethany Christ could make the householder in Jerusalem throw open his guest-chamber, Peter might have learnt that, from heaven, Christ could make the prison-doors fly open for his escape.

Were not then all the details of the errand before us, even when you leave out the exercise of the faith of the disciples, every way worthy of the wisdom and goodness of our Lord, expressive of his tender consideration for the circumstances of his followers, and of his desire to afford them the instruction and encouragement which might best fit them for coming duties and trials? Indeed, it is easy to imagine how, when his death was near at hand, Christ might have wrought miracles, and uttered prophecies, more august in their character, and more adapted to the excitement of amazement and awe. He might have darkened the air with portents and prodigies, and have brought up from the future magnificent processions of thrones and principalities. But there would not have been, in these gorgeous or appalling displays, the sort of evidence which was needed by disquieted and dispirited men, whose meanness suggested to them a likelihood of their being overlooked, and who, expecting to be separated from their Master, might fear that the separation would remove them from his care. And this evidence, the evidence that Jesus had his eye on those whom the world might neglect or despise, and that He did not require to be visibly present, whether to keep down an enemy or support a friend—ah, this was given, so that the disciples might have taken it, in all its preciousness, to themselves, when every thing came to pass which had been involved in or indicated by the directions, "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Mas-

ter saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"

And should we be warranted in assigning any thing of a more typical or symbolical meaning to the directions which were thus issued by our Lord? Indeed, in so doing, we should not be without the sanction of eminent interpreters, whilst the accuracy and beauty of the type must readily commend themselves to every thoughtful mind. It was not for the mere purpose of celebrating the passover that our blessed Lord sought a guest-chamber where He might eat his last supper with his disciples. Then and there was He to institute that commemorative, that sacrificial rite, in and through which the Church, in all ages, was to feed on his body, and drink of his precious blood. The supper was to be concluded by his taking bread, and blessing it into the sacramental representative of his flesh, wine into the sacramental representative of his blood; and by the issuing of a solemn injunction that the like should ever after be done in devout remembrance of Himself. Thus, in that guest-chamber, was the feast on the paschal lamb to be virtually abolished; but only that there might be ordained in its stead a profounder and more pregnant mystery, the feast on the true Paschal Lamb, partaking of which the faithful, to the end of time, might apprehend and appropriate the benefits of the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world.

But the sacrament of the body and blood of our blessed Redeemer is for those only who have been duly initiated by the sacrament of baptism into the visible Church. It is not the initiatory sacrament, not that through which we are first grafted into Christ, and made members of his mystical body; but that through which, having by another ordinance been born again, and received into the family of God, we are kept in that holy fellowship, and nurtured up to everlasting life. Hence the one sacrament, whose outward sign is water, is preparatory to the other sacrament, whose outward part or sign is bread and wine; and it were, indeed, the most perilous invasion of the highest privilege of Christians, were any, who had not been washed in the laver of regeneration, to intrude themselves at that table where,

in awful remembrance, and effectual significance, there is distributed that flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed.

But was not all this, in a measure, shadowed out—or, if not intentionally shadowed out, may it not be lawfully traced—in Christ's directions to his disciples on which we have discoursed? How were the disciples to find out the guest-chamber? By following a man "bearing a pitcher of water." The water was, it as were, to lead them into the guest-chamber, the chamber where they were to find the body and blood of their Lord. You may pronounce this nothing but an accidental coincidence, if, indeed, you will presume to speak of any thing as accidental, undesigned, and insignificant, in the actions and appointments of Christ. But we cannot help counting the coincidence too exact, and too definite, to have not been intended—at least, if we may not use it in confirmation, we may in illustration of a doctrine. The disciples, indeed, may have attached no symbolical meaning to the pitcher of water: they were in quest only of a room in which to eat the passover, and knew nothing of the solemn rite about to be instituted. Hence, to them there would be nothing in the pitcher of water, but a mark by which to know into what house to enter. But to ourselves, who are looking for the guest-chamber, not as the place where the paschal lamb may be eaten, but as that where Christ is to give of his own body and blood, the pitcher of water may well serve as a memento that it is baptism which admits us into Christian privileges, that they, who find a place at the supper of the Lord, must have met the man with the water, and have

followed that man—must have been presented to the minister of the Church, and have received from him the initiatory sacrament; and then have submitted meekly to the guidance of the Church, till introduced to those deeper recesses of the sanctuary, where Christ spreads his rich banquet for such as call upon his name.

Thus may there have been, in the directions for finding the guest-chamber, a standing intimation of the process through which should be sought an entrance to that upper room, where Christ and his members shall finally sit down, that they may eat together at the marriage supper. For the communion of the body and blood of the Redeemer is itself to "show forth the Lord's death" only "till He come," and shall give place, as the passover gave place to it, to a richer banquet, in a yet higher apartment of the heavenly kingdom. That apartment, too, like the upper room in Jerusalem, is large, and furnished, and prepared—large enough to admit us all, furnished and prepared with whatsoever can minister to happiness. And having been admitted by baptism into the Church below, having sought continued supplies of grace in the upper room, at the altar where the Master is "evidently set forth, crucified among" us—ay, having thus, in the simplicity of faith and obedience, submitted ourselves to Christ's ordinances, because they are his ordinances, as did the disciples to his directions, because they were his directions, we may humbly hope to pass hereafter into that yet loftier abode—more truly "the large upper room"—where Christ shall everlastingly give his people of his fulness, and make them drink of his pleasures as out of a river.

SERMON IV.

THE SPECTRE'S SERMON A TRUISM.

"Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"—Job iv 15, 16, 17.

Every one must, of course, be aware that, whilst the Bible is throughout to be implicitly depended on, as neither recording historically anything but facts, nor delivering didactically anything but truths, it does not follow that every passage may, in the strictest sense, be taken as the word of God. In the historical parts of Scripture, the sayings, as well as the actions of various persons are registered; and whilst in many instances the actions are such as God did not approve, in others the sayings are such as He did not inspire.

It does not then follow, that, because words are found in the Bible, they may be taken as announcing some truth on which the preacher may safely proceed to discourse. They may be the words of a man in whom the Spirit of God did not dwell, of a heathen whose creed was falsehood, or of a blasphemer who despised all authority. In such cases, what is termed the inspiration of Scripture warrants nothing but the faithfulness of the record: we are sure that the sayings set down were actually uttered: the pen of the historian was guided by God's Spirit, but only in regard of the strict office of the historian, that of registering with accuracy certain occurrences. And, of course, if the inspiration extend only to the man who records, and not to him who utters a saying, the saying itself may not be necessarily truth, though the Bible itself undividedly is. In the majority of instances, indeed, we doubt not that the two things concur—the speaker was directed what to say, as well as the historian what to record—or rather, by

directing the historian to insert certain sayings in his book, the Spirit of God may be considered as having appropriated those sayings, and given them in a measure the stamp of his approval.

We here speak especially of the sayings of holy men of old. It would not, of course, be easy to show—nay, we do not suppose it to be true—that, in all which the saints, whether of the old or the new dispensation, are recorded to have said, we may look for the utterances of men immediately and literally inspired. But, nevertheless, we think that, in preserving their sayings, and causing them to be transmitted to all future days, the Spirit of God has so far sanctioned them by his authority, that they should be received by us with much of that reverence which is due to express and explicit revelation.

We make these general remarks, because our text is the utterance of an individual for whom we cannot perhaps claim, on indubitable testimony, that he spake by the Spirit of God. It is Eliphaz the Temanite who speaks, one of those three friends of the afflicted Patriarch Job, who "had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him," but who virtually did little but upbraid the sufferer, aggravating his griefs by injurious suspicions, and false accusations. We are naturally so disposed to feel angry with men who dealt, to all appearance, so harshly with one whose sorrow and patience should have secured him the most tender sympathy, that it would not be difficult to persuade ourselves that their

discourses are not to be taken as part and parcel of the inspired Scripture. But we are able to show, by a simple yet incontestable proof, that, if the Spirit of God did not inspire these men, He has given to their sayings, by placing them within the inspired volume, much of the weight which his own dictation must always impart.

There is probably but one distinct quotation in the New Testament from the Book of Job. St. James, indeed, refers generally to the history of Job, but he does not adduce any words from the narrative. St. Paul, however, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, has quoted from the Book, and that too, with the form, "it is written," which always serves, in the New Testament, to mark what is quoted as part of Holy Scripture, strictly so called. In order to prove his proposition, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," St. Paul states, "For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Now it is in the Book of Job that these words are written; and the observable thing is, that they are not words uttered by Job himself, but by that very person, Eliphaz the Temanite, who also delivers the words of our text. We have, therefore, what amounts to conclusive evidence, that, whatever at times the injustice and false reasoning of Eliphaz, the Spirit of God employed him, even as He afterwards did Balaam, in delivering truths for the instruction of the world.

We have desired to make this clear to you, before entering expressly on the examination of the text, because we wished to guard against any suspicion, that we might be laying too much stress on a passage for which we could not claim the full authority that belongs to what the Holy Ghost has indited. Though, indeed, if we could not thus vindicate, in general, the inspired character of the utterances of Eliphaz, there would be little room for doubting, that, in the particular instance which has to come under review, this Temanite spake by the direction of God. He recounts a vision; he records words which were mysteriously brought to him amid the deep silence of the night; and if we could not carry further our confidence in what he said, we might, at least, be sure that what he affirmed had actually

taken place, and that words, which he quoted as delivered to him by an unearthly voice, had indeed been breathed in so startling and impressive a manner.

On every account, therefore, we can plead for our text as having all that claim on your reverential attention which belongs to inspiration in its highest degree. Come, then, with us; and as Eliphaz records what he saw, and what he heard, attend as you would to the utterances of a messenger from the invisible world. We do not want to make the blood run cold, nor to thrill you with a strange and undefinable dread. But, nevertheless, we would use the wild and awful circumstances of the vision to give solemnity to the truth which is brought to our notice; for it may be that with you, as with Eliphaz, there will be a listening with greater abstraction and intensesness of feeling, if it be from a dim and flitting image, and after a deep portentous silence, that you hear the questions asked, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?"

Now there can be no dispute that we have, in the narrative of Eliphaz, the account of an apparition: a purely spiritual being, such as an angel, assumed a visible though indescribable form, and stood before Eliphaz in the stillness of the night. It is generally regarded as proof of a weak and superstitious mind, to put faith in what are termed ghost stories, tales of apparitions, whether of the dead, or of unknown visitants from the spiritual world. But we do not see why so much of scepticism and ridicule should be afloat on the matter of alleged apparitions. We see nothing, whether in the statements of Scripture, or the deductions of reason, from which to decide that there cannot be apparitions; that the invisible state may never communicate with the visible through the instrumentality of phantoms, strange and boding forms that are manifestly not of this earth. And if you cannot show, either from revelation, or from the nature of things, that apparitions are impossible, of course the truth or falsehood of any alleged case is simply dependent on testimony—no amount of testimony could make me believe that a known impossibility had taken place; but any thing short of a known impossibility might be substantiated by evidence;

and certainly, therefore, an apparition may be substantiated, for no one will ever prove the actual impossibility. There may easily be a weak and fond credulity in regard of ghosts and apparitions; but there may be also, we believe, a cold and hard scepticism: and knowing how thin is the veil which hangs between the visible and invisible worlds, and how transparent that veil is to spiritual beings, though impervious to mortal sight, it might be better for us to be classed with the credulous—if it be credulity to yield on sufficient testimony—than with those who are too enlightened to be superstitious, if superstition be the thinking that God, for wise purposes, may sometimes draw aside the veil, or make it transparent on this side as well as on the other.

Neither should we wonder if much of that dogged resistance, which is opposed to the best authenticated narratives of apparitions, may be traced to men's repugnance to the being brought into contact with the invisible world. They instinctively shrink from communion with a state, which their irrepressible fears people with dark and fitful imagery; and it is, therefore, with them a sort of self-defence, to take refuge in a thorough scorn of the possibility, that spirits, which are verily around them, might assume human shape, and become on a sudden visible and vocal.

It is moreover worth observing, that the Bible, so far from discountenancing the notion of apparitions, may be said to give it the weight of its testimony, and that too in more than one instance. We have already remarked that no more thorough case of apparition can be even imagined, than is put upon record in the narrative of Eliphaz. You could not find, in the most marvellous of ghost stories, more of supernatural demonstration, nor more of that paralyzing effect, which, ever since sin separated between man and God, appears produced, even on the best, by visitations from the spiritual world. The passing of the spirit before the face of Eliphaz; the standing up of the hair of his flesh; the indistinctness, yet truth of the image, so that no straining of the eye could make the form definite, nor any cause it to disperse; and then, after a solemn pause, the deep oracular voice, burdened with weighty question—why, there is nothing

in any book, whether of fiction or fact, which takes greater hold on the imagination, or more exquisitely portrays what might be supposed a case of apparition. If every subsequent tale of supernatural appearance be invention or fable, at least the fable is modelled after a true story; and we should have Scripture from which to prove that there might come an apparition, if we had no human record whatsoever that any had been seen.

Besides—for it might with some justice be said that what happened in early days, when revelation was scant, and God supplied the want by immediate intercourse, ought not to be taken in proof of what may happen in later—if you observe what is recorded of the apostles of Christ, you will find that the notion of apparitions was not only commonly entertained, but that it passed unrebuked by our Savior Himself. When Christ approached his disciples, walking on the sea, we read, "They were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear." They evidently supposed that there might be an apparition, that a spirit might assume human form; and though you may say that this arose only from the ignorance and superstition of the disciples, it is, at least, observable that our Lord proceeded immediately to quiet their apprehensions, but not to correct their mistake—"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

On the occasion, moreover, of his own Resurrection, he gave yet stronger countenance to the notion that spirits might appear. When he stood suddenly in the midst of the assembled disciples, having entered the chambers though the doors were closed, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." That Christ should have obtained admission, notwithstanding the barred entrance, was a similar phenomenon to his treading the waters as though they had been a solid pavement; and the disciples took refuge in the same supposition, that it was no human being, such as one of themselves, but a spectral thing, which could thus set at nought the laws to which matter is subject. And though it does not appear that, on this occasion, they expressed their apprehensions, Christ knew their thoughts, and at once

took pains to show them their error. But how? not by saying, there are no such things as apparitions, and you are weak, and ignorant, in imagining that spirits ever take form, and come amongst men—which is just what might have been expected from our Lord, the great teacher of the world, had there been an error to correct—but by showing that He Himself could not be a spirit, forasmuch as He had all the attributes and accidents of a body. “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” We can hardly think that our Lord would thus have given a criterion, as it were, for distinguishing a spirit or an apparition, were it indeed only the fable or fancy of the credulous, that the tenantry of the invisible world may occasionally be sent by God with messages to man, or that the grave may, to all appearance, give back its inhabitants for the disclosure of foul deeds, or the warning of the living.

Of this only may we be persuaded, that it would not be on any trivial or ordinary occasion that God drew the veil, and commissioned spiritual beings to appear upon earth. In some great crisis, whether to nations or to individuals, He might see fit to convey intimations through the agency of a spectre, employing supernatural machinery to give warning of a coming catastrophe, to prepare a people for battle, or a sinner for dissolution. The rich man, whilst he tossed on the fires of hell, imagined that if the dead Lazarus were permitted to revisit the earth, and to appear amongst his brethren in the midst of their carelessness and revelry, the effect would be to stir them to repentance, and so prevent their joining him in his place of deep torment. And therefore did He passionately beseech that the apparition might be sent, and that the beggar might stand before his dissolute kinsmen in the startling form of one risen from the grave. The request was denied: but it was not denied on the principle that the case was not one for supernatural interference, but on the reason that they, who could resist the teaching of Moses and the prophets, would remain unpersuaded by the warnings of a spirit.

It was the sort of case in which we

might look for the apparition, so far as its importance was concerned. But it is not God's method, to employ extraordinary means, when ordinary ought to have sufficed; and, therefore, they who yield not to the ministrations of the Gospel, and are not warned by daily judgments and occurrences, must not think to have the silences of the midnight broken by a mysterious voice, nor the solitude of the chamber invaded by a boding spectre, in order to their being compelled to give heed to religion. It is not that there might not be wrought, in many instances, a beneficial and permanent effect on the careless and impenitent, through the medium of an apparition. For though in the parable, to which we have referred, it is stated that they, who heard not Moses and the prophets, would not “be persuaded though one rose from the dead;” this can only be understood of such as have listened to Moses and the prophets, and remained unconvinced: there is yet a vast number, even in a land flooded with the light of revelation, who can hardly be said to be cognizant of the Gospel; and, very possibly, upon these the spectral messenger would produce great effect; though, forasmuch as their ignorance of the Gospel may be traced to their own negligence and wilfulness, it is not to be expected, that, on their behalf, shall graves be depopulated, and wild unearthly phantoms make the night terrible.

Still the general proposition remains, that, if ever the veil which God hath hung between the visible and the invisible world be withdrawn, so that, in shape and bearing discernible by man, a spirit cross the separating line, it must be on some great and mighty occasion, when an awful truth is to be delivered, or a dread event foretold. And if any thing can give solemnity to a message, any thing persuade us of its being the announcement of something deep and momentous, it must be its being breathed from spectral lips; or that, in agreement with the thrilling words which the ghost of Samuel used to Saul in the cave of the enchantress, one of the dead hath been disquieted that he might bring the communication. Come then, we again say, it must be a vast and startling truth which we have to lay before you: it would not otherwise have been con-

veyed through the ministry of a spectre : there would not otherwise have been need of an express revelation, and that, too, by the voice of a flitting figure, whose pale and shadowy form caused the hair of the spectator's flesh to stand up. If there be deep words in Scripture, or words to which we require extraordinary testimony, surely they must be those, which, in departure from all common course, God sent a spirit to utter—and thus it was that these questions were breathed, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"

And here we bring you to the point which appears to us to require the being closely examined. It is very certain, that, on reading the account of the apparition which stood before Eliphaz—an apparition so mysteriously terrible, that he declares, in the verse preceding our text, "Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake"—we naturally prepare ourselves for some very momentous communication, for a truth which lay beyond the reach of reason, or which was likely to have remained undiscovered, had not God thus strangely interposed, and conveyed it through an extraordinary channel. All that can be said as to the mode of revelation in early, or patriarchal, days, when visions were employed because as yet the Divine purposes were not laid open to the world, only confirms the expectation that it would be some truth of overwhelming interest, scarcely to be detected by the researches of natural theology, with whose delivery a spirit came charged.

But the question now is, whether such an expectation be, in any measure, answered; whether, in other words, there be any thing of apparent keeping between the message itself, and the supernatural machinery employed to give it utterance. We do not think that, at first sight, there is. Surely, if there be an elementary truth, a truth, at least, which every one who believes in the existence of a God may ascertain without revelation, and must admit without questioning, it is, that man cannot be more just than God, nor more pure than his Maker. You might exclaim, We need no angel from heaven to teach us this: this follows immediately on the confession of a God: in no age of the world

can it have been necessary to teach those, who believed in a God, that God must be better and greater than themselves; theoretically, at least, they must always have held this proposition, and could not have required the being confirmed in it through a supernatural visitation.

And however scanty may have been the amount of express revelation in the days of the Patriarch Job, there is no debate that a pure theism was the creed of himself and his friends: that they must have been as well aware as ourselves, and as ready to acknowledge, that there existed a Being to whom every other was tributary and inferior, and whose perfections were further removed than is heaven from earth, from whatsoever may be likened to them in human characteristics. We cannot well doubt, that, had Eliphaz been asked, before the mysterious visitant came upon him in the midnight, which he believed the more just, and which the more pure, man or his Maker, he would have answered without hesitation, that there could not be comparison; he would perhaps have expressed surprise, that any one could have supposed that the lofty Being who inhabiteth eternity, might be rivalled in any excellence by the creatures of a day.

But what then are we to gather from the visit of the spectre? wherefore was there this departure from ordinary rules, this sending of a special messenger from the invisible world, if nothing were communicated that was not already well known, nothing but the most elementary truth, which, even in the greatest dearth of revelation, must have been accessible to all who, possessing any mind, employed it upon Deity? We readily own that there is a great apparent discrepancy between the employed instrumentality and the communicated message. We should have quite expected that the apparition would have announced some abstruse, mysterious proposition; that, as it was sent for the purpose of affording instruction, its utterances would not have been limited to an ascertained and incontestable fact. If there had been any thing that could strictly have been called a revelation; if some property of Godhead had been made known, which was not discoverable by reason; or if some intimation had

been granted of the wondrous scheme of rescue which in the fulness of time was to be acted out on the earth, there would seem to us a sufficient end for the appearance of the spirit, or a keeping between the purpose and the agency. But to send a spectre, to send it with every terrible accompaniment, so that it seems to have chilled the blood and palsied the tongue of the spectator, and to give it nothing to say, but that God is juster and purer than man—there does indeed appear here a kind of incongruity; and we are bound to examine whether there be not some lesson conveyed in the very circumstance of the employment of a vision, when, according to our apprehensions, there was no need of supernatural teaching. And forasmuch as we know assuredly that the means which God employs are always the best, precisely adapted, and never disproportioned, to the end, it must rather become us to conclude that the truth, which the apparition delivered, is not so universally admitted as we suppose, than to wonder that what every one acknowledges should have received so marvellous an attestation.

It is here that we come upon the chief unconstructiveness of the passage. We wish you indeed to contrast the solemnity and awfulness of the agency employed with the simplicity and commonness of the message delivered. But we do not mean you to infer that the agency was disproportioned to the message: we rather call upon you to examine whether, notwithstanding the ready confession, the message be not one in regard of which there is a secret infidelity; whether, in short, there be not often needed some such instrumentality as that of the spectre, to persuade even ourselves that mortal man is neither more just, nor more pure than his Maker.

We may suppose that Eliphaz adduced the vision as applicable to the circumstances of Job, who laboring under most weighty affliction, would be tempted to arraign the equity of the Divine dispensations. It would not have been surprising, in a measure it would seem to have been the case, had Job compared the righteousness of his life with the severity of his lot, and had he drawn from the comparison conclusions unfavorable to the moral government of God. Indeed, they who had

known the purity of the patriarch, and then observed the fearful judgments by which he was overtaken, must have had need of strong faith to repress injurious suspicions, and to justify to themselves the ways of their Maker. Yea, so difficult was it to do this, without falling into an opposite error, that the three friends of Job could only defend God by accusing the patriarch; they vindicated the judgments which were visible, by supposing some wickedness which had not been detected. Accordingly, Eliphaz quoted what he had heard from the apparition, as though to repress what was struggling in the breast of the sufferer, or to assure all, who might be staggered by his calamities, that God must be clear in the matter, whatever might be said as to man. It was as much as to say, appearances are perplexing: judging from these alone, we might decide against the Divine equity, and suppose that even human beings would act with greater justice. But I can tell you of an express communication from Heaven, intended to fortify against such injurious suspicions: there stood before me a messenger from the invisible world, and in accents which thrilled through the soul he denounced the imagining that, under any possible circumstances, man can be juster and more pure than God.

Thus the vision was probably granted, and certainly used, to oppose an infidelity more or less secret—an infidelity which, fostered by the troubles and discrepancies of human estate, took the Divine attributes as its subject, and either limited or denied them altogether. And what say you, men and brethren, as to there being no such infidelity amongst ourselves? We are persuaded, that, if you will search your own hearts, you will find that you often give it some measure of entertainment. We are persuaded of this in regard both of God's general dealings, and of his individual or personal.

And, first, of God's general dealings, of those of which the whole race, as a body, is the subject. In spite of all the demonstrations of theology—nay, in spite of all the acknowledgments and confessions of men, when pressed for an answer—there is harbored a suspicion, if not a persuasion, that God acted in a manner unworthy of his perfectness,

when He suffered Adam to fall, and entailed a heritage of woe on myriads which had no share in his transgression. There is so much of mystery round the permission of evil; it is apparently so strange, that, for a single fault, calamity and death should have been made the portion of successive and mighty generations; that, reason how we will, and prove what we will, numbers secretly cherish the thought that there was injustice with God, or, if not injustice, a defective benevolence.

We are not afraid of putting it to your own consciences to attest the truth of this. We are sure that many amongst you will secretly acknowledge, that, when they look on a world overrun with sorrow, and, yet more, when they think on the fire and the worm which must constitute the future portion of those who obey the evil passions roused in them through the apostasy of Adam, they feel as though there were something harsh and inexplicable in the dispensation, something not to have been expected from such a being as God, but more or less at variance with the presumed attributes of his nature. And we are not now about to expose the thorough falseness of the opinion. We have often done this. We have often shown you, that, forasmuch as God had all along determined the redemption of man, it consisted as much with goodness as with justice that He permitted his fall—there having been provision, in the mediatorial arrangement, for the bestowment of far greater happiness on the race than it lost through the original sin.

But it is not our present business to vindicate the equity of the dealings in question: we have simply to do with the suitability of sending an apparition, when that equity might be the burden of the message which it bore. The point which lies for our inquiry, is merely, whether such a supernatural agency as was employed towards Eliphaz be, or be not, disproportioned to the communication with which the spectre was charged. And our belief is, that there is no disproportion; that, even now, with all the aids which revelation can supply, and with the glorious things of redemption thrown open to our view, there is frequently harbored a feeling that God's ways were not

worthy of Himself, when He exposed our first parents to temptation, and, having suspended on a single act the interests of countless myriads, interfered not to prevent the universal shipwreck. We care not whether the feeling be openly avouched, though that is far from rare—enough that it is secretly cherished; and so long as any man, viewing the condition of the world, and tracing that condition to its cause, is disposed to accuse God of a want, whether of equity or of benevolence, in regard of his first dealings with our race, so long may it be said that an apparition would be suitably employed, if employed to deliver only such words as those which the affrighted Eliphaz heard. I know that you would expect, and very justly, that, if the silence of the midnight is to be broken by an unearthly voice, it must be for the announcement of some very great truth; that, if you are to be startled by a boding form, gliding to the bedside, it must be on some extraordinary occasion, and for some momentous purpose. But we should find such an occasion, and such a purpose, wheresoever there was a disposition to arraign God's dealings with mankind, to doubt, if not to deny, their thorough consistence with the alleged attributes of his nature. It is nothing to say that there is already sufficient information, if there be still a secret and lingering infidelity. The sufficiency of the information may be a reason against expecting a supernatural visit; but the fact of the infidelity is proof of what would be the suitability of the visit. And though I know of any one of you, that he has in his hands the Bible, that amazing register of God's gracious purposes and arrangements on behalf of the fallen and lost, and that he attends the ministrations of the Gospel, through which is laid before him a scheme of restoration far more than commensurate with the ruin wrought by sin, yet I should not be surprised, I should not, that is, feel as though there were an agency disproportioned to the need, were I to hear of this man, that he had been visited by such a form as that which stood before Eliphaz, and, nevertheless, that this form had uttered only the questions which Eliphaz heard. I know too well how possible, how common, it is for men to be staggered by

the permission of evil, notwithstanding what is revealed to them as to the final prevalence of good. I know too well what secret misgivings there are, what questionings, what doubtings, what suspicions: and with what a distressed and apprehensive look many survey the aboundings both of iniquity and of misery, as though they feared that on so troubled a sea there could not sit majestic the righteousness of the Lord. And could I then think that an apparition had been commissioned for a necessarily insufficient end, if commissioned only to declare the pre-eminent and immutable attributes of the Most High?

Not so: the means would, in no sense, be disproportioned to the end, and the end would be in every sense worthy of the means. It might be that the chamber, which the spectre invaded, was that of one whose mind had long been harassed by the common doubts, and who, despite the testimony of Scripture, was wont to argue upon human principles in respect of the fall, and to reach conclusions derogatory to the Divine perfections. There are thousands such in every division of Christendom—I doubt not there are some, whether few or many, amongst yourselves. Single me out such an individual. I dare not predict, that, at some coming midnight, the spectre will be at his side. I do not say that he has right to expect a supernatural visit, when the ordinary means of instruction are so ready to his hand, and so abundant in themselves. But this I say—that I should see nothing to wonder at, nothing to persuade me that God had used extraordinary agency where it was not required, if that individual came to me, and told me, with all the indications of one who still quailed at the remembrance, that, in some deep silence, and in some dark solitude, there had hovered before him an indistinct form, forcing itself to be felt as from the unseen world, by the creeping of the flesh, and the standing of the hair; that there had come forth from it a voice, such as never issued from human thing; and, nevertheless, that the only utterances thus syllabled in fearfulness and mystery, were these simple questions, “Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?”

My brethren, will you be disposed to

say that we overstate facts, if we now turn from the general dealings of God to the individual, or personal, and contend that the main of our foregoing argument is applicable without the change of a letter? We have hitherto reasoned on a disposition towards questioning the equity of those dealings of which our whole race is the subject, as sprung of a rebellious ancestry. We have contended that such a disposition is common, notwithstanding the full testimonies of revelation, so that numbers cherish a secret infidelity, thinking man more just than God, inasmuch as man would not have permitted so ruinous a thing as our first parents' fall. And we have argued, that, so long as this secret infidelity exists, it would not be without sufficient cause that an apparition passed the boundary line between the visible and the invisible world, though it should have nothing to utter but elementary truth, like that heard by Eliphaz, truth quite discoverable by reason, though you keep out of sight the aids of revelation. But now let us ask you whether that very infidelity, which we have thus labored to expose, does not gain power over many, when individually subjected to trials and afflictions? Alas, how easy is it to confess that God doeth all things well, till his hand is on ourselves; and how common, then, to feel as though his dealings were strange, and hard to be justified. There is no more frequent expression than such as this, “What a mysterious Providence! what a dark dispensation!” You can scarcely speak to a Christian when in trouble, without hearing some such words. Whether it be the death of a child, or of a parent, the loss of property, or the frustration of some long-cherished plan, with which he has been visited, his tone is commonly that of one to whom something has happened which could not have been looked for, and who cannot account for the permission of the evil.

Now we do not mean to say that there are no such things as what are popularly termed mysterious providences; but we are sure that the name is frequently given where there is no mystery at all. The end for which God appoints, or, rather, permits affliction, is to turn men to Himself, if they be yet the impenitent, and to wean them more from the world, if they be already converted. It

can, therefore, in no case be actually surprising that affliction should come, because even the most righteous are so far from perfect, that, to their dying day, they will need corrective discipline. Where then, in strict truth, is the mysteriousness of a dispensation, if we can always see the designed advantageousness? There is something of contradiction here. The Christian tells me that the death of his child is a dark dealing—wherefore dark, if himself confesses that he is not yet refined, as he should be, from the dross of this earth, and, therefore, has further need of passing through the furnace? He may not be able to trace a connexion between the particular sorrow and some particular sin: he may not, that is, be able to assign any one special reason for any one special affliction—and so far there might be mystery, were it, indeed, his business to affix to every stripe an individual cause—but he can see clearly enough that he requires chastisement in the general; and how then can it be mysterious that chastisement should come?

And we cannot but feel, that, in a variety of instances, this speaking of the mysteriousness of a common dispensation, indicates a secret doubt as to the goodness or fitness of the dispensation: men would not be so ready to call a thing inexplicable, if, all the while, they felt that it was wisely and benevolently ordered. We do not mean to say that a Christian may not, at one and the same time, regard a dealing as mysterious, and feel it to be good: but where mysteriousness is ascribed to that for which there is evidently reason in abundance, we have ground to suspect that there is no real persuasion of there being such reason at all. And judge ye yourselves, ye to whom God has been pleased to allot much of sorrow, whether ye have not cherished a secret suspicion that ye were dealt with in a manner not to have been looked for from One who knew your frame, and remembered that ye were dust; whether ye have not used what ye have called the darkness of the dispensation, to cover a doubt, if not a denial, of its goodness?

We would have you call to mind your misgivings, when some beloved object has lain dead in your houses, or your rebellious questionings when trouble of

one kind or another has made way into your families; and you will hardly, we think, be able to deny, that, in seasons of affliction, there is a tendency, in the face of all the testimony of Scripture and experience, towards disbelieving the fundamental attributes of God, or regarding his dispensations as at variance with his perfections. Ah, if you want evidence that the apparition, in bringing the very simplest and most elementary of messages, brought what was worthy of a supernatural conveyance, you might often find that evidence in the chamber of some mourner who is weeping for the dead. It may be that yonder mother, as she looks on the rigid pale face of her child, imagines herself resigned, and professes her persuasion that God hath smitten her in love. But doubts are struggling in her mind; the affliction seems to her inexplicable: she cannot understand why she should have been thus visited: the Bible, indeed, assures her of the compassion, the tenderness, of the Almighty; but she turns from comforting texts to the sad spectacle before her—so young, so beautiful, so gentle, would not a merciful being have spared awhile that sweet flower?—and then the tears, which the light of revelation had almost dried, break forth again, and, though taken for the gushings of nature, are rather the flowings of unbelief.

Now is it not certain that this distracted and sorrowing parent requires to have impressed upon her the most elementary of truths, that God cannot do wrong, that He cannot do other than the best? Whatever her theory, it is practically this truth of which she wants persuasion; it is this truth in which she has no thorough belief. And if, then, it were to please God to vouchsafe her a supernatural communication, would it not be worthy of God, would not the supernatural machinery be fitly employed, if the message were nothing more than that sent to Eliphaz? She has the Bible: she has the revelation of the Gospel: but, notwithstanding these, she is secretly distrustful of God, and inclined to arraign the goodness of his dealings. Then I do not know, that, as she sits there, and wails over the dead, a shadowy thing will pass before her, and bring words from above. But this I know—that, if an apparition were to

enter, and stand, in its unearthliness, at the side of the coffin where her child lies so still, the most appropriate message which the spectre could deliver, would be the simple one which was brought so thrillingly to Eliphaz. Ay, that mother might rush from her chamber with the seared and wan look of one who had gazed on the being of another sphere; and she might relate to me, circumstantially and convincingly, how, in the darkened room, and amid that silence which is the more oppressive because it makes every sob so distinct, she had been confronted by a form whose very mystery proved it an inhabitant of the invisible world. But when she had collected herself sufficiently to tell me what the spectre had said, I should expect to hear nothing of new revelation, nothing as to the state of the departed, nothing as to the happiness of heaven. I should expect, as most precisely what she needed, and therefore as most likely to be thus strangely transmitted, that the apparition, which had made the hair of her flesh stand up, would have left these words printed on her mind, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"

And thus we may, perhaps, have done something towards removing the appearance of disproportion between the vehicle employed and the message conveyed—the vehicle supernatural, the message the most simple, and apparently not needing the being delivered at all. I do not know whether you may have been used to observe the disproportion; but, certainly, to my own mind it is very striking. I almost tremble at the description which Eliphaz gives of the spirit. I feel sure that this dim and awful visitant must have come for a momentous and extraordinary purpose. I prepare myself, accordingly, to hear from his lips some deep, majestic, and perhaps inscrutable, truth—when, lo, there is nothing uttered but what every child knows, what every one believes, in believing a God. Our great object has been to show you, that, simple as the truth is, and unhesitatingly acknowledged, it is nevertheless one in regard of which there is a prevalent, though secret unbelief, so that an apparition would not be employed on what did not

need the being supernaturally taught, if employed to enforce so elementary a proposition.

And there is one general inference which we wish to draw from the apparent, though not actual disproportion. It is this—that truths, which we never think of disputing, may be those which practically we are most in the habit of forgetting. It is of well-known things that a spectre must speak to us, if it would speak of what it is important that we know. The apparition is not needed to impart new truth, but to impress old. O strange but actual condition of man—that, if a spirit were sent to him with a message for his good, it would be only of things with which he has long been familiar. The apparition enters the chamber of the man of pleasure—what says it to the terrified voluptuary? "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Why, he knew this before; he has heard it a thousand times—yes; but this is what he practically disbelieves: he lives as though he were not to die, and, therefore, what he needs from the apparition is the being told his mortality. The gliding spectre goes stealthily to the side of a miser; as the wealthy accumulator cowers and quails before the phantom, in what words is he addressed? "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out;"—why, this is no news: must the sheeted dead come back to tell a man this? no news, indeed—yet this is what the covetous practically disbelieves; he hoards as though his riches were to go with him into eternity; and therefore would the apparition be employed to the most necessary end, if employed to give impressiveness to the very tritest of truths.

It is the same in every other instance. With every one of us there is some simple truth about which there is no dispute, but to which there is no power; and if a spectre were sent with a message, it would be this truth which it would be most for our advantage that it should deliver; the delivery being needed, not to increase our knowledge, but to make the knowledge influential. Alas! alas! is not this true in regard of all the uncontroverted in the present assembly? Spirits of the dead, appear amongst us. Rise as shadowy, vapory

things, and preach, in the name of the living God, to the men and the women who yet care nothing for their souls. What will they say? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Why, I have preached this to you a hundred times: ye have heard it, till ye are wearied by the repetition. And yet, if we want spectres at all, we want them only to deliver this common-place truth: it might be effectual, as breathed by their wild strange voices, though often uttered without avail by mine.

So that, it is not to tell you what is new, but to make you feel what is old, that we would invoke the phantoms, and beseech them to arise. But they come not—why should they? ye must be self-condemned, if your remaining in danger of everlasting death be only through your not acting on your knowledge. It is not a revelation which you need: and therefore must you not ex-

pect that God will depart from ordinary rules, and send ærial beings to make revelation more impressive. The spirits will not appear now, to force you to accept what you make light of when offered through the ministrations of your fellow men. But the spirits shall appear hereafter. "Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" shall be around the Judge. They shall attest the equity of the sentence which dooms to destruction those who have put from them pardon through Christ. I hear the words that were heard by Eliphaz—if, for a moment, those appointed to the fire and the shame attempt to arraign the justice of their portion, a voice like the voice of many thunderings, or of mighty waters, bursts from the throng, the countless throng, of spirits, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall man be more pure than his Maker?"

SERMON V.

VARIOUS OPINIONS.

"Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"—*St. JOHN vii. 40, 41, 42.*

We often speak of the great changes and revolutions which have occurred in the world: history is considered as little else than the record of the rise and fall of communities, families, and individuals. But, throughout the long series of vicissitudes, there may be traced much of what is permanent and perpetual; so that, probably, sameness or uniformity is as truly the characteristic of human history as variety or diversity. It may, for example, be always ascertained by a careful observer, that the same

principles have pervaded God's moral government: amid all changes and chances, it can be seen that an overruling providence has been at work, guiding the complicated instrumentality, and directing it to the furtherance of certain fixed purposes and ends. It may also be perceived that the elements of human character have throughout been the same: man has changed in his fortune and position, but not in himself: you find him in the most opposite conditions, according as civilization is advanced or

defective, according as power is bestowed or withheld; but you never find him other than a creature inclined to evil, and not liking to "retain God in his thoughts."

This sameness in human character might be traced in the minutest particulars. Not but what there are many and marked differences between the savage, and the man of a polished age and community; but they are not differences in the staple, so to speak, of the moral constitution; you might in any given case make the one out of the other, and still have the same enmity to God and to righteousness, because you would still have the same depraved heart. And forasmuch as the human heart, in its unrenewed state, has all along been the same, answering always to the scriptural description, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," there can be no surprise that so great sameness may be traced in man himself, notwithstanding the perpetual shiftings of his condition: you can expect nothing but that, when viewed as the creature of God, he should exhibit the same prejudice, opposition, and dislike; make similar objections to the divine dealings, and justify unbelief by similar fallacies.

It were beside our purpose to go into evidence, on the present occasion, of the moral, or religious sameness, which may be traced, we affirm, throughout the history of man. But our text, relating, as it does, opinions and debates of the Jews with regard to our Lord, will give us great opportunities of observing this sameness in some particular cases. We shall probably find that the sort of reasoning, by which the claims of Christianity were parried at its first introduction, is still practised amongst ourselves: we may be compelled to say that men are what they were more than eighteen hundred years back, on discovering that the grounds of scepticism are but little shifted; that modern indifference, or unbelief, borrows from ancient its form and apology.

Leaving this, however, to open upon us as we advance with our subject—or rather, preparing you by it to expect that we shall turn much of our discourse on resemblances between the Jews and ourselves—we will go straightway to the scene presented by the text: we will hearken to the various and conflicting

sentiments which are being expressed in regard of our Redeemer; and we will see whether we may not find matter of instruction and warning, as some call Him the Prophet, some the Christ whilst others are asking, whether it be not indeed contrary to Scripture, that the Christ should come out of Galilee.

Now the first parties introduced into our text, are those who were disposed to recognize in our Lord a teacher sent from God: for though it is not quite clear whom they intended by "the Prophet"—whether Him of whom Moses had spoken, "a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me," and who was none other than Messiah Himself; or whether that Prophet who was generally expected as the forerunner of the Messiah—there can be no question that they meant some one with a commission from above, some instructor, authorised by God to deliver intimations of his purpose and will. Probably, indeed, they who call our Lord "the Prophet," did not thereby mean the Christ; for the Evangelist makes two classes, those who confessed "the Prophet" in our Savior, and those who confessed the Christ; and this he would hardly have done, had the same personage been intended, but under different names. In either case, however,—and this is all with which we are at present concerned—a teacher with divine authority was evidently recognized: something had been done, or said, by our Lord, which produced a conviction—though it may have been only transient, and without practical results—that He was no deceiver, no enthusiast; but that He spake in God's name, and bore his commission.

And it will be very interesting to observe what had been the immediate producing cause of this conviction; for we so generally find our Lord treated with contempt and neglect, his miracles being ascribed to Beelzebub, and his discourses listened to with apparent indifference, that we naturally look for something very memorable in the doing or the saying, which could influence the multitude to regard with favor his claims.

It was not, as you learn from the first verse of our text, any action of Christ which wrought this effect: He had not just then been working one of his more

stupendous miracles; though this, you may think, would most readily have explained the sudden conviction of his being Messiah. The effect is expressly attributed to a "saying" of our Lord. "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet." And what was the wonder-working saying? Those of you who do not remember, will be apt to imagine that the saying must have been one of extraordinary power, some mighty assertion of divinity, or, perhaps, some verification in himself of ancient prophecy, too complete and striking to be resisted, even by Jewish unbelief. Certainly were it put to us to conjecture a saying by which Christ was likely to have overcome for a time the general infidelity, it would be natural for us to fix on some sublime and magnificent announcement, some application of Scripture, or some declaration of supremacy, which carried with it startling evidence of unearthly authority. And we are far from wishing to imply that the actual saying of our Lord was not of the kind which would be thus readily supposed; but at first sight, at least, it scarcely seems such as might have naturally been expected. You find the saying in the thirty-seventh verse of the chapter. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." This was the wonder-working saying. Our Lord indeed proceeded, in the following verse, to bear out, as it were, the saying by a quotation from ancient Scripture, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." But it is evident enough that this is only given in illustration, or vindication of the saying; so that still the saying, on which many of the people yielded, was the simple invitation in the thirty-seventh verse.

And it ought not to be overlooked, that, before the Evangelist describes the effect of the saying on the people, he introduces, in a parenthesis, a comment on the saying. It is very unusual with the sacred writers to affix any explanation of the meaning of our Lord; but this is one of the rare cases in which a commentary is subjoined; for St. John adds, "But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should

receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This is very observable, because, by adding an explanation of the saying, the Evangelist would seem to imply that it was, in a measure, difficult or obscure: nevertheless, it wrought with surprising energy on a great mass of hearers: simple as it seems to us, dark as, in some respects, it must have been counted by St. John, it succeeded at once, if not in permanently attaching numbers to Christ's side, yet in wringing from them a confession that He could be none other than a divinely sent teacher. Here, then, we have a point of very great interest to examine. Let us separate it from the remainder of the text, and set ourselves simply to consider what there was in the saying which our Lord had uttered, to induce many of the people to exclaim, "Of a truth this is the Prophet, and others, This is the Christ."

Now you will observe at once, that the saying before us is one of those gracious invitations, into which may be said to be gathered the whole Gospel of Christ. It demands, indeed, a sense of want, the feeling of thirst: but if there be this, it proffers an abundant supply. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And by adding a reference to Scriptures, which, though not then fully understood, could only be interpreted of some measure and kind of supernatural influence, our blessed Lord may be considered as intimating, that what He promised to the thirsty was a spiritual gift, the satisfying of desires after God and immortality. Whatever the degree in which the promise may have been understood, there can be no doubt that it was received as relating to communications of Divine grace, that it was thought, or felt, to convey assurance of instruction in the knowledge of God, and of assistance in the great business of saving the soul.

Here is the moral thirst, to which every one must have been conscious that our Lord had respect, and which is not to be slaked at the springs of human science, or of natural theology. And if there were many, as there may have been, in the throng surrounding Christ, on the last and great day of the feast, who, dissatisfied with the traditions of the elders, felt the need of higher teach-

ing in order to acquaintance with heavenly things, we may quite understand how the gracious promise of living waters would come home to them, as meeting their wants; and how the felt suitability of the offer would pass with them as an argument for the Divine mission of Him by whom it was made.

There is no difference here, according to our introductory remarks, between past days and our own: we have but to transfer the scene to ourselves, and the like invitation may produce the like effect. For the argument herein involved is, after all, but that on which we have often to touch, and which is based on what we call the self-evidencing power of the Bible, the power which there is in it, quite apart from outward credentials, of commending itself to the conscience as the word of the Almighty. You are all aware of the difference between the external and the internal evidence for the truth of Christianity. There is a vast mass of external evidence in miracles which have been wrought, and prophecies which have been accomplished. But there is also a vast mass of internal evidence, in the suitability of the revealed doctrines to man's ascertained wants, in the exactness with which the proposed remedy meets the known disease. One man may be convinced of the Divine mission of a teacher, by seeing him work wonders which surpass human power; another, by hearing him deliver truths which surpass human discovery. A religion may commend itself to me as having God for its author, either by prodigies wrought in its support, or by the nicety with which it fits in to the whole mental and moral constitution, to the complicated wants, and the restless cravings, of a soul which has sought in vain every where else for supply and direction.

And this latter is the standing witness for the Bible. The sinner who is conscious of exposure to the wrath of God, and of utter inability in himself to ward off destruction, will find in Christ so precisely the Savior whom he needs, and in the proffered aid of the Spirit so exactly the help adapted to his circumstances, that there will seem to him no room for doubt as to the truth of the Gospel: like parts of one and the same curious and intricate machine, the Bible, and the human conscience and heart, so

fit in to each other, that there must have been the same Author to all: it is felt, even where there is no external demonstration, that He who wrote the book, must have been He who made the man.

We do not, of course, mean that this self-evidencing power of Scripture will commend itself to all with the same readiness, and urgency, as might a visible miracle performed in its support. There is required a peculiar state of mind, in order to the appreciating the internal testimony: it springs mainly from the correspondence between the remedy and the disease, and cannot, therefore, be detected except where the disease has been felt. And you observe, accordingly, that the saying of our Lord, which is now under review, supposes a sense of deficiency, or a feeling of want: it invites only the thirsty: the thirsty alone will be inclined to hearken to it: but the thirsty will be attracted by its proffering exactly what they feel that they need. Thus with the everlasting Gospel. It proposes a Savior to lost sinners: they who feel themselves lost sinners will quickly discern in Christ such a Savior as they need: they who are altogether void of such a feeling will find in Him "no form, nor comeliness;" and if overcome by the external evidence for the truth of Christianity, will merely assent to it as to a barren speculation, a question of history, about which, even when professedly convinced, they remain practically indifferent.

There is probably enough in these remarks to explain why it should have been on the hearing a certain saying of our Lord, as is expressly noted by the Evangelist, that many of the people were disposed to own Him for the Christ. Do you wonder that such an effect should not rather have followed on the working of some miracle, than on the utterance of some saying? Nay—you are to observe that there is a state of mind, a state aptly delineated by the imagery of thirst, which is more accessible to an appropriate doctrine than to any outward demonstration: the thirsty man feels the suitability of a promise of water, and is at once disposed to close with the proffer, without waiting for signs that He who makes it has authority to deal with his case.

But, admitting that a doctrine may prevail where even a miracle has no

power, do you next wonder that the saying, which wrought with so great energy, should have been so simple and unpretending as it is? Nay—we set against this opinion the whole of what has been advanced as to the self-evidencing power of the Bible. I have right to assume that there were many in the crowd who thirsted; and Christ could not have spoken more immediately to the consciences and hearts of such as thirsted, than by inviting them to come to Him that they might drink. Who thirsts? the man who, feeling himself a sinner, pants for the forgiveness of his sins. The man who, conscious of inability, longs to be assisted in turning unto God. The man who, made aware of his immortality, craves endless happiness. The man who, taught that God is just, seeks eagerly to discover whether He can be also the justifier of the fallen. What will these thirsty ones listen to most readily? in what words will they be most disposed to recognize the voice and the authority of truth? Certainly, as no message will so much meet their need, none will so much commend itself to them as proceeding from God who best knows their wants, as that which shows how thirst may be satisfied, how the longing for forgiveness, for righteousness, for happiness, on the part of sinful creatures, may be appeased without violence, nay, rather, with honor, to Divine justice and purity.

And though Christ did not go into all these particulars, there was that in his saying which addressed itself to every case of spiritual thirst; which no thirsty man could fail to take to himself; so that you have only to suppose that many were thirsting in the crowd, and you suppose many to whom the invitation must have come home with the self-evidencing power which we claim for the Gospel. If there were not enough, in so brief and unexplained a saying, to prove that Christ came from God, there was enough to incline those, who were conscious of spiritual wants, to receive teaching from One who offered the very thing of which they were in quest. If the simple invitation were not likely, of itself, to convince such as had not heard of Him before of his being the Messiah, yet, when it came upon anxious and craving minds, which had already been moved by the fame of his

miracles, it was adapted to scatter all doubts, and to turn into full persuasion the growing conjecture. Miracles, of themselves, cannot prove a Divine mission: they must be wrought in defence of truth; otherwise we may not ascribe them to the finger of God. But He who, having worked miracles to fix attention on his doctrine, then proceeded to utter doctrine which was as water to the parched and wearied soul of man—oh, he indeed left no place for unbelief, save with those who were hewing out broken cisterns for themselves, or fancying that they could call up fountains of their own in the desert. And thus, if it could only have been in an imperfect degree that the self-evidencing power, which is now so energetic in Scripture, resided in the short saying to which these remarks have respect, you have only to bring into account the actual state of the multitude, as not unacquainted with the supernatural works performed by our Lord, and you have explanation enough why so great a disposition to acknowledge Him was called forth by what He uttered on the last day of the feast, why many of the people, when they heard that saying, said, “Of a truth, this is the Prophet, or this is the Christ.”

But now let us mix again with the crowd, and hearken to some other of the opinions which are being passed to and fro in regard of our Savior. There is nothing like uniformity of sentiment: they who are inclined to conclude that He can be none other than the long-promised Christ, find themselves met with objections, objections which are all the more formidable, because professing to ground themselves on Scripture. “But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?” There is no attempt at invalidating the miracles, or depreciating the doctrines of our Lord; but there was a fatal argument, as these men urged, against his being the Messiah, an argument deduced from ancient prophecy, which had expressly fixed the birthplace and lineage of Christ. “Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”

No doubt, Scripture had said this; and it would have been an insuperable objection to the claims of any one, professing himself the Messiah, that he had

not sprung of David's line, or not been born in Bethlehem. If our Lord had come out of Galilee, in the sense supposed by those who made the objection, it would be of no avail to multiply proofs of his having been the Christ: the evidence is against Him on one material point, and the defect is not to be counterbalanced by any amount of testimony on other particulars.

But this is really among the most surprising instances on record, of ignorance or inattention, if we may not go further, and accuse men of wilfully and unblushingly upholding what they knew to be false. It is hardly possible to imagine a matter of fact that might have been more readily ascertained, than that our Lord had been born at Bethlehem, and that his mother and reputed father were of the lineage of David. For the massacre of the innocents, by the cruel order of the tyrannical Herod, had made his birth so conspicuous, that it almost passes charity, that any could have been ignorant that He had not sprung from Galilee. At all events, when his parentage and birthplace were associated with so bloody a tragedy, a tragedy which could not yet have faded from the popular mind, the very slightest inquiry would have sufficed to correct so gross a misapprehension. It has always seemed as if God, in his over-ruling Providence, made the fury of Herod subserve the cause of the Gospel; for there was no one left but our Lord, who could prove Himself to have been born in Bethlehem on the expiration of Daniel's weeks of years: all others, born about that time, had perished by the sword; and, therefore, either He were the Messiah, or prophecy had failed.

So that—to say the very least—had men taken the smallest possible trouble, they might have known that our Lord was no Galilean in such sense as impeached the fulfilment of prophecy; but that, on the contrary, He had all that evidence on his side which could be drawn from parentage and birthplace. They might have fixed on other predictions in regard of the Messiah, the accomplishment of which in the person of our Lord was not of such clear and easy demonstration. But the predictions which had to do with his nativity, were just those on which we should have fastened, as intelligible to all in their

meaning, and accessible to all in their fulfilment. Yet so great was the popular indifference, or so strong the popular prejudice, that a statement seems to have gone uncontradicted through the land, that the pretended Messiah was by birth a Galilean: He passed by the name of "Jesus of Nazareth;" and this went in proof that He was not born in Bethlehem. Ay, and it may even be gathered from our text, that men were so glad of some specious excuse for rejecting our Lord, that, when his works, or his sayings, had almost constrained their belief and adherence, they caught eagerly at the shallow falsehood, and made it, without farther evidence, a pretext for continued opposition. It does not seem that when they who said, "This is the Prophet," or, "This is the Christ," found themselves met by the objection, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee," they had any reply to make: the impression from the narrative is—especially if you couple it with the known fact that very few of the people joined themselves to our Lord—that they considered the objection decisive; that they were ignorant of the facts of the case, and took no pains to inform themselves better. Indeed, we know not what fairer interpretation to put upon the circumstance, than that the eagerness to disprove the pretensions of Jesus made men seize, without examination, on any popular mistake which seemed to justify unbelief, and then avoid the finding out the mistake, because they could not spare so convenient an argument. However numbers, such as are described in the text, may have been at times half disposed to acknowledge the Christ, the secret wish of their hearts, as is clear from the result, must all along have been to the getting rid of so strict and uncompromising a teacher; and all they wanted was something of a specious pretence which might reconcile to their conscience what their inclinations prescribed. And it would be quite a treasure to these waverers, to meet with what might pass for a scriptural objection; it was like taking holy ground: it was making rejection a positive duty: it left them at liberty to admit the miracles, and admire the doctrines, but, alas! this remarkable Personage did not answer to certain tests laid down by the Prophets, and there was no alternative to

the refusing to receive Him as the promised Redeemer.

And when they once had hold of the scriptural objection, they would be at no pains to examine it carefully: there would be danger in this; and, busied as they were with a thousand other necessary things, they might well be permitted to take for granted what could hardly have been alleged, except it had been truth—Jesus universally passed for a Galilean, and mistake was insupportable in regard of a fact so easily ascertained. O the deceitfulness of the heart! what force it will find in an argument which sides with its wishes, what fallacy in another which opposes them! Think you that we exaggerate what was done by the Jews? Nay, we shall presently have to show you that they are not without their copyists even amongst ourselves. But, at present, put, if you can, any milder interpretation on the registered facts. God might be said to have inscribed the nativity of our Lord on the walls of Bethlehem, in the blood of its slaughtered infants. The nativity, which produced such a tragedy, could not have been difficult to ascertain, could have required no labored research into national archives, or family genealogies. Any man then, who knew that prophecy had fixed Bethlehem as the place of Messiah's birth, might equally have known, had he thought it worth while to inquire, that there had He been born who was called Jesus of Nazareth. But men had an interest in remaining deceived; their wish was not that of ascertaining truth, but rather that of finding a specious apology for adhering to falsehood. There is such a thing as shrinking from inquiry, through a secret dread of finding oneself in the wrong. A man may abstain from asking a question, because self-conscious that the answer might oblige him to change an opinion which he would rather not give up.

And this is what, from the evidence before us, we charge upon the Jews. Oh, it looked very fine to have Scripture on their side; the devil had used the Bible in tempting our Lord, and they could now use it in justifying their unbelief. But "the sword of the Spirit," like every other sword, may be used for suicide as well as for war. And if ever so used, it was in this instance. A fact

had been predicted, and in characters of blood had history registered the prediction's fulfilment. Yet was the prediction, which, for the trouble of asking, would have powerfully upheld our Lord's claims, turned, on the credit of an idle report, into a reason for their utter rejection. And men, who were just on the point of yielding to our Lord, overcome whether by the majesty of his miracles, or the sweetness of his discourses, turned away from Him, and sealed their own destruction, because they had no answer at hand, or took for granted that none could be given, to an objection which rested on a falsehood, and the falsehood one which a breath might have scattered, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture saith that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"

And now, to recur to our introductory remarks, which asserted a sameness in human depravity and conduct, think ye that the like to this is not of frequent occurrence amongst ourselves? that the Jews have no successors in that readiness to disbelieve, which will seize on any straw for an argument, and actually be at pains to keep out of the way of any opposite evidence? Nay, it is done every day; we need not search far to be in possession of instances.

What is that scepticism which is often met with amongst the boastful and young, that sickly infidelity, which it were almost pity to attack with vehemence, so manifestly unprepared is it for vigorous defence? Is it the result of deep reading, or careful investigation? nothing of the kind. The fashionable young man, the student at a hospital, the orator at some juvenile literary club, gets hold of some objection against Christianity, which has a specious sound, and a formidable look—all the better, if it come out of the Bible itself, in the shape of an alleged contradiction, or an erroneous assertion; and this is enough for him; he has his "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" and with one so decisive an argument, why should he trouble himself to search for any more? Oh, no—you are quite right; one sound argument is as good as a host: I did not blame the Jews for determining that Jesus could not be the Christ, if He had come out of Galilee; no amount of

evidence upon other points could have outweighed this simple testimony against Him.

But the aspiring sceptic will not be at the pains of inquiring into the strength of his objection. He will not refer to books, and, much less, to men better informed than himself, in order to know whether the objection have not been at least a hundred times refuted—and this is our quarrel with him. He wishes to continue deceived: it would be very distasteful to him to find himself in the wrong, and, therefore, he would rather avoid than seek the means of instruction. We are bold to say of all the popular arguments against the Bible, especially of those drawn from the Bible itself, that they have been so often refuted, their weakness and worthlessness so often exposed, that only overbearing effrontery, or unpardonable ignorance, will venture on repeating what is so worn out and stale. It were really, if I may use the expression, almost a refreshment, to meet with something a little new in sceptical objections. But it is the same thing again and again—"Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" and the sceptic, like the Jew, has really only to look round him, to ask a question, or consult a book, and he would find that Jesus did not come out of Galilee, but "out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was." God suffered infants to be slain, that the Jewish unbelief might be inexcusable; and He has raised up giants in his Church, whose writings will ever be a rampart to the Bible, that modern unbelief might be alike inexcusable. As easily may any one of you who has met with an objection to Christianity meet with its refutation, as might the Jews, hearing that Jesus was of Nazareth, have learned that He was actually of Bethlehem. But, alas! it is with the young and conceited, as it was with the Jews—there is a secret wish to be rid of Christianity; and it is safer not to make too close inquiry, lest it should only do away with a convenient excuse.

And we do not give this case of the youthful would-be sceptic, as the solitary exemplification of "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" How fond are men of getting hold of some one text of Scripture, and shielding themselves under it from all the rest of the Bible! Who

has not heard, "Be not righteous overmuch," quoted, as though it excused a man from endeavouring to be righteous at all? And "charity shall cover a multitude of sins," is a most convenient passage: there is needed only a little misinterpretation, and a careful overlooking of all other Scripture, and a man may satisfy himself, that, by a little liberality to the poor, he shall hide his misdoings, or obtain their forgiveness. Every such fastening on any single text, without taking pains to examine and consider whether there be not some great and fundamental mistake, is but the repetition of what was done by the Jews; the Bible has said that Christ must come out of Bethlehem; and men are glad enough, without any inquiry, to reject a Gospel whose Author is reputed to have come out of Nazareth.

Shall we give you other instances? If a man wish to depreciate baptism, or the fitness that He who administers so holy an ordinance should have a commission from God, he has his text, his "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" St. Paul said to the Corinthians "I thank God that I baptized none of you save Crispus and Gaius. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." Then St. Paul made but little of baptism, and thought that the administering it fell beneath his high office! Did he indeed? why, this is worse than the Jews: they had to travel perhaps as far as to Bethlehem, to ascertain their mistake, but you need not go beyond the next verse to that which you quote, "Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name." Paul was thankful that he had baptized but few; for he judged, from the temper of the Corinthian Church, that, had he baptized many, it would only have encouraged that party-spirit which was so utterly at variance with vital Christianity. And this is making light of Baptism, or entitling any one to administer it! Alas, it seems of very little worth that Jesus was actually born at Bethlehem, since his ordinary name is "Jesus of Nazareth."

To take but one instance more. What numbers declaim against an Established Church! how persuaded are they that it is utterly unlawful for the civil power to meddle with religion, to take direct measures for the upholding Christianity,

in place of leaving it to that purest and most active instrumentality, "the voluntary principle." You may be sure that these declaimers have their text: they have their question, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee," out of acts of parliament, and compulsory payments? Hath He not said, "My kingdom is not of this world?" O the triumphant tone with which these words are uttered, the complacency with which they are considered as settling the controversy, and disgracing endowments! But have the words any thing to do with the matter? in what sense did Christ mean that his kingdom was not of this world? Nay, Bethlehem is not farther, in this case, from Galilee, than in that last adduced. They are both in one verse. "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews." So then, the sense, as here defined, in which Christ's kingdom is not of this world, is simply that the sword is not to be used in its defence. "If my kingdom were of this world," my servants would fight like other soldiers; but it forbids persecution and war; so that it is "not of this world," in the sense of allowing, or depending on martial force or resistance. What has this to do with Church Establishments? Alas! this text, which is noised from one end of the land to the other, is, for all the world, the same in the hands of its perverters, as "Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh out of Bethlehem?" in the hands of the Jews. Because Christ was of Nazareth, as having lived there much, He could not have been born in Bethlehem:

because his kingdom is not of this world, as not permitting the slaughter of its enemies, it cannot lawfully be fostered by states which are its friends.

But we have no further space for multiplying instances. We have thrown out a subject for thought; and if you will consider for yourselves, you will easily find additional illustrations. It is no uncommon thing—this is our position—for men to seize on some one verse or declaration of the Bible, and to make it their excuse for clinging to a false theory, or neglecting a plain duty. Not that in any case the verse, justly interpreted and applied, will bear them out—no more than the prophecy as to Bethlehem warranted the Jews in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth. But there may be an appearance of reason, something plausible and specious; and error can never be more dangerous than when it seems to have Scripture on its side. The grand point then is, that you be on your guard against arguing from bits of the Bible, in place of studying the whole, and comparing its several parts. "No prophecy of the Scripture," and, in like manner, no portion of the Scripture, "is of any private interpretation." Settle the meaning fairly, by searching, with prayer for God's Spirit, into the relation which each statement bears to others, and by examining the light which it derives from them. The meaning, thus ascertained, shall never, no, never be contradicted by facts; if it be clear from the Bible that the Christ must be born in Bethlehem, it shall be always be found, on examining, that our Lord was **not** born in Nazareth.

SERMON VI.

THE MISREPRESENTATIONS OF EVE.

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden : but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die.”—GENESIS iii. 2, 3.

Whatever may have been the change which passed over man in consequence of sin, we are not to doubt that we retain, in great measure, the same constitution, weakened indeed and deranged, but compounded of the same elements, and possessing similar powers and tendencies. There does not appear to have been any essential difference between the mode in which Satan tempted Eve, and that wherein he would assault any one of ourselves under similar circumstances. Neither, so far as Eve allowed the bodily senses to serve as instruments of temptation, have we reason to think that the trial at all differed from that to which the like inlets subject ourselves. The devil threw in a suspicion as to the goodness of God, suggesting that the restriction as to the not eating of a particular fruit was harsh and uncalled for, and insinuating, moreover, that the results of disobedience would be just the reverse of what had been threatened. And, certainly, this is much the way in which Satan still proceeds : whatever the commandment, our obedience to which is being put to the proof, he tries to make us feel that the commandment is unnecessarily severe, and that, in all probability, the infringing it will not be visited with such vengeance as has been denounced.

Thus also with regard to the bodily senses. Eve was tempted through the eye, for she saw that the tree was pleasant to the sight ; she was tempted also through the appetite, for she saw that the tree was good for food. And this was precisely as the senses are now instrumental to the service of sin : no doubt

now that our nature has become depraved, these senses are readier avenues than before for the entrance of sin into the heart : but, nevertheless, the eye and the taste, in the instance of Eve before she transgressed, acted a part of the very same kind as they perform now in cases of every day experience.

Indeed it ought to be observed that, according to St. John, all the sin that tempts mankind may be comprised in these three terms, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” To these three may evidently be reduced the temptation of our first parents : there was “the lust of the flesh,” in that the fruit was desired as good for food ; “the lust of the eye,” in that the fruit was pleasant to the sight ; and “the pride of life,” in that it was “to be desired to make one wise.” To the same three may as evidently be reduced the temptation of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, on this very account, may be declared to have been “tempted in all points like as we are.” Our blessed Savior was assailed through “the lust of the flesh,” when tempted to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread. “The lust of the eye” was employed, when the devil would have had Him cast Himself from a pinnacle of the Temple, and thus obtain, by an useless and ostentatious miracle, the applauses of the crowd assembled there for worship. And “the pride of life” was appealed to, when Satan proffered our Lord “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,” on condition of his falling down and worshipping him.

These three departments are still

those under which all sin may be ranged. If you take any particular temptation, you may always make it answer to one of the terms, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." So that—to recur to our introductory remark—there passed no such change on human nature in consequence of apostasy, as that the elements of our constitution became different from what they were. If our first parents, whilst yet unfallen, were assailed in the same way, and through the same channels, as ourselves on whom they fastened corruption; if our blessed Redeemer, who took our nature without taint of original sin, was tempted in the modes in which temptation still makes its approaches; we may most justly conclude that our constitution remains what it was, except, indeed, that our moral powers have been grievously weakened, and that a bias towards evil has been laid on our affections, which places us at a real disadvantage, whensoever assailed by the world, the flesh, or the devil.

But when we have thus in a measure identified our constitution with that of our first parents before they transgressed, it is highly interesting and instructive to study all the circumstances of the original temptation, and to see whether they may not still be often, and accurately paralleled. So long as we separate, or so distinguish, ourselves from our first parents in their unfallen state, as though there had been an actual difference in nature, the account of the original transgression is little more to us than a curious record, from which we can hardly think to derive many personal lessons. But when we have ascertained that our first parents were ourselves, only with moral powers in unbroken vigor, and with senses not yet degraded to the service of evil, the history of their fall assumes all the interest which belongs to the narrative of events, which not merely involve us in their consequences, but the repetition of which is likely to occur, and should be earnestly guarded against.

We wish, therefore, on the present occasion, to examine with all carefulness the workings of Eve's mind at that critical moment when the devil, under the form of a serpent, sought to turn her away from her allegiance to God. This is no mere curious exami-

nation, as it might indeed be, had Eve, before she yielded to temptation, been differently constituted from one of ourselves. But it has been the object of our foregoing remarks, to show you that there was not this difference in constitution: a piece of mechanism may have its springs disordered and its workings deranged; but it is not a different piece of mechanism from what it was when every part was in perfect operation; and we may find, as we go on, that the workings of Eve's mind were wonderfully similar to those of our own, so that we shall not only sustain all our foregoing argument, but be able to present our common mother as a warning, and to derive from her fall instruction of the most practical and personal kind. Without then further preface—though you must bear in mind what we have advanced, that you may not think to evade the application of the subject, by imagining differences between Eve and yourselves—let us go to the patient consideration of the several statements of our text; let us examine what may be gathered in regard of the exact state of Eve's mind, from her mode of putting, first, the permission of God, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden," and secondly, his prohibition, "The fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Now the point of time at which we have to take Eve is one at which she is evidently beginning to waver: she has allowed herself to be drawn into conversation with the serpent, which it would have been wise in her, especially as her husband was not by, to have declined; and there is a sort of unacknowledged restlessness, an uneasiness of feeling, as though God might not be that all-wise and all-gracious Being which she had hitherto supposed. She has not yet, indeed, proceeded to actual disobedience: but she is clearly giving some entertainment to doubts and suspicions: she has not yet broken God's commandment; but she is looking at it with a disposition to question its goodness, and depreciate the risk of setting it at naught. There are certain preludes, or approaches, towards sin, which, even in ourselves, are scarcely to be designated sin, and which must have been still farther removed from it in the unfallen

Eve. You remember how St. James speaks, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." The Apostle, you observe, does not give the name of sin to the first motions: if these motions were duly resisted, as they might be, the man would have been tempted, but not have actually sinned.

And if so much may be allowed of ourselves, in whom inclinations and propensities are corrupted and depraved through original sin, much more must it have been true of Eve, when, if tottering, she had not yet fallen from her first estate. She was then still innocent: but there were feelings at work which were fast bringing her to the edge of the precipice; and it is on the indication of these feelings that, for the sake of warning and example, we wish especially to fix your attention.

It was a large and liberal grant which God had made to man of the trees of the garden. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." It is true, indeed, there was one exception to this permission: man was not to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil;" but of every other tree he might not only eat, he was told to "eat freely," as though God would assure him of their being all unreservedly at his disposal. But now, observe, that, when Eve comes to recount this generous grant, she leaves out the word "freely," and thus may be said to depreciate its liberality. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden." This is but a cold version of the large-hearted words, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." She is evidently more disposed to dwell on the solitary restriction than on the generous permission: she is thinking more of the hardship from the one than of the privilege from the other. It was a bad, a dangerous symptom, that Eve suffered herself to look slightly on the rich mercies with which she was blessed, and that she could speak of those mercies, if not in a disparaging tone, at least without that grateful acknowledgement which their abundance demanded. It laid her perilously open to the insinuations of Satan, that she was contrasting what she had not, magnifying the latter, and depreciating the former.

But is not the symptom one which may be frequently found amongst ourselves? Indeed it is; and we point it out in the instance of Eve, that each one of you may learn to watch it in himself. There is in all of us a disposition to think little of what God gives us to enjoy, and much of what He gives us to suffer. It may be but one tree which He withholds, and there may be a hundred which He grants: but, alas! the one, because withheld, will seem to multiply into the hundred, the hundred, because granted, to shrink into the one. If He take from us a single blessing, how much more ready are we to complain as though we had lost all, than to count up what remain, and give Him thanks for the multitude. He has but to forbid us a single gratification, and, presently, we speak as though He had dealt with us with a churlish and niggardly hand, though, were we to attempt to reckon the evidences of his loving-kindness, they are more in number than the hairs of our head. And when we suffer ourselves in any measure to speak, or think, disparagingly of the mercies of God, it is very evident that we are making way for, if not actually indulging, suspicions as to the goodness of God; and it cannot be necessary to prove that he, who allows himself to doubt the Divine goodness, is preparing himself for the breach of any and every commandment.

Learn then to be very watchful over this moral symptom. Be very fearful of depreciating your mercies. It shewed an intuseness of danger in the instance of Eve, that, when God had given her permission to "eat freely," she could speak of herself as permitted only to "eat." There was no falsehood in her account of the permission: she does not deny that she was allowed to eat of the trees of the garden; but there was a dissatisfied and querulous way of putting the permission, as though she avoided the word "freely," that she might not magnify the riches of the Divine liberality. And we warn you, by the fall of Eve, against the allowing yourselves to think slightly of your mercies. It matters not what may be your trials, what your afflictions:—none of you can be so stripped but what, if he will think over the good which God has left in his possession, he will find cause for acknowledging in God a gracious and a generous

benefactor. But if, because you are debarred from this or that enjoyment, or because this or that blessing is placed out of reach, you make little of, or comparatively forget, the rich gifts of God; ah! then indeed there is a fearful probability of your being left to harden into the unthankful and unbelieving: with Eve, you may seem only to leave out the word "freely;" but God, who is jealous as well as generous, may punish the omission by such withdrawal of his grace as shall be followed by open violation of his law.

O for hearts to magnify the Lord's mercies, and count up his loving-kindnesses! It is "freely" that He has permitted us to eat of the trees of the garden. He has imposed no harsh restrictions, none but what, shortsighted though we are, we may already perceive designed for our good. Placed as we are amid a throng of mercies, rich fruits already ripened for our use, and richer maturing as our portion for eternity, shall we speak of Him as though He had dealt out sparingly the elements of happiness? Shall we—just because there is forbidden fruit, of which we are assured that to eat it is to die; or withered fruit, of which we should believe that it would not have been blighted unless to make us seek better—shall we deny the exuberant provision which God hath made for us as intelligent, accountable creatures? Shall we forget the abundance with which He has mantled the earth, the gorgeous clusters with which He has hung the firmament, the blessings of the present life, the promises of a future, and the munificent grant with which He has installed us as Christians into a sort of universal possession, "All things are yours; ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's?"

Nay, we again say, take ye good heed of misrepresenting God, of depreciating your mercies, of exaggerating your losses. There cannot be a worse sign, a sign of greater moral peril, than when a man repines at what is lost, as though there were not much more left, and dwells more on God as withholding certain things, than as bestowing a thousand times as many. And that you may be aware of the dangerousness of the symptom, and thereby led to cultivate a thankful spirit, a spirit disposed to compare what God gives with what He de-

nies;—a comparison which will always make the latter seem little, because immeasurably exceeded by the former—study with all care the instance of Eve, and observe that her first indication of tottering towards her fatal apostasy lay in this, that, when God had issued the large and generous charter, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," she could reduce it into the cold and measured allowance, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden."

But we may go farther in tracing in Eve the workings of a dissatisfied mind, of a disposition to suspect God of harshness, notwithstanding the multiplied evidences of his goodness. You are next to observe how she speaks of the prohibition in regard of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." She left out a most important and significant word in stating God's permission as to the trees of the garden, and thus did much to divest that permission of its generous character. But she inserted words when she came to mention the prohibition, and by that means invested it with more of strictness and severity than God seems to have designed. The prohibition as it issued from God was, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." But the prohibition as repeated by Eve was, "Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it." She affirmed, you observe, that God had forbidden the touching the fruit as well as the eating of it; whereas it does not appear that God had said anything as to the touching. There might indeed have been prudence in not touching what might not be eaten; for he who allowed himself to handle would be very likely to allow himself to taste. Still, the touching the fruit was not, as far as we know, actually forbidden by God; and we may therefore say of Eve, that she exaggerated the prohibition, even as she had before disparaged the permission.

And you will readily perceive that precisely the same temper or feeling was at work when Eve exaggerated the prohibition, and when she disparaged the permission. There was in both cases the same inclination to misrepresent God, as though He dealt harshly with his creatures: to leave out the word "free-

ty" was to make his grant look less liberal; to put in the words, "neither shall ye touch it," was to make his law look more rigid; and it was evidently the dictate of the same rising suspicion, or a part of the same tacit accusation, when God's gifts were depreciated, and when his restrictions were magnified.

Alas for Eve, that she could thus ascribe harshness to God, and speak as though He denied his creatures any approach towards knowledge. She might as well have said that God had forbidden them to look upon the tree; whereas it is clear that not only might they look at the fruit, but that the eye was able to detect certain properties of the fruit; for you read that "the woman saw that the tree was good for food," the color probably informing her something of its nature. And we cannot tell what additional information might have been obtained through touching the fruit. But if the eye could detect certain properties, the touch, in all probability, detected more. Even in the darkness and feebleness into which we have fallen, each sense is instrumental to the ascertaining the qualities of substances; and this power of the senses must have been vastly greater in our first parents; Adam gave names to every living creature, the names undoubtedly being expressive of the natures, and thus showed that he could ascertain at once, without any informant but himself, their several characteristics.

We may, therefore, reasonably infer that, whilst eating of the tree of knowledge was distinctly forbidden, and thus our first parents were debarred from such discoveries as the sense of taste might have imparted, they were able to determine a great deal in regard of the fruit, through their other senses, of which they were allowed the unrestricted use. But Eve, you see, was disposed to make out that God had extended his prohibition to other senses besides that of taste, and thus had prevented them from making any advance towards the knowledge of good and of evil. You would have argued, from her version of the prohibition, that God had altogether enclosed, or shut up the tree, guarding it with the most extreme jealousy and rigor, so that there was no possibility of detecting any of its properties. Whereas the restriction was only on the ex-

amining the fruit, in and through that sense which would make it bring death; and there was the warrant of the Divine word, that to taste would be to die. All that could be learnt—and it was probably very considerable—from sight, and touch, and scent, Adam and Eve were at liberty to learn; whilst what the taste could have taught was distinctly revealed; and thus the single prohibition did not so much withhold them from the acquisition of knowledge, as from the experience of disaster.

But now, was Eve singular in the misrepresenting the prohibition of God? was she not rather doing what has been done ever since, what is done every day by those who would excuse themselves from the duties and obligations of religion? To hear men of the world talk about religion, you might imagine that God's law forbade all enjoyment whatsoever of the pleasures and satisfactions of life, that it prescribed nothing but gloom and austerity, and required from those who would save the soul, that they should forego every gratification which their nature solicits. They will talk to you of piety, as if it were necessarily of a most morose and melancholy tenor, as if it debarred men from all participation in visible good, requiring them to move amid what is bright, and beautiful, and attractive in creation, but only that they might mortify the propensities which find therein their counterpart objects. Because God has distinctly forbidden our finding our chief good in earthly things, because He has limited us to a moderate or temperate use of these things, therefore will men perversely misrepresent his enactments, and pretend that He would shut them up in the most dismal seclusion, as though He had given them appetites which were not to be gratified, desires which were only to be resisted, and yet, all the while, had surrounded them with what those appetites crave, and those desires solicit. Whereas, there is nothing prohibited by the Divine law but just that indulgence of our appetites and desires, which, because excessive and irregular, would, from our very constitution, be visited with present disappointment and remorse, and, from the necessary character of a retributive government, with future vengeance and death.

We suppose it capable of a most

thorough demonstration, that the man of religion, the man who allows himself in no indulgence which religion forbids, whose appetites are never his masters, but who is "temperate in all things," has more actual enjoyment, even of what earth can afford, than the reckless slave of sense, who, in the expressive language of Scripture, would "work all uncleanness with greediness." And there never, we believe, was a falser charge than that which would fasten upon religion such a severe code of precepts, and such a stern series of sacrifices, as must make its disciples do perpetual violence to their feelings, and live within reach of pleasures in which they must deny themselves all share: whilst they who renounce religion are dividing amongst themselves whatever good the present life can give. Religion forbids all that is irregular or excessive in the use of earthly things; but it forbids nothing more; and whilst we are constituted as we are, whilst there is no slavery so oppressive as the being slaves to our own lusts, whilst there are the irrepressible workings within us of a great moral principle, causing uneasiness, and even anguish, to follow on criminal indulgence—nay, it is no boast of idle declamation, it is the statement of a simple and sober calculation, that the religious man, partaking only so far as religion permits, enjoys, in a much higher degree than the thorough-paced worldling, the very objects for which that worldling throws away his soul.

Thus God is just doing with us as He did with our first parents in regard of the tree of knowledge. He did not altogether debar them from that tree; He only debarred them from eating of that tree; knowing that they had but to eat of it, and they would find it to be death. And He does not debar us from the enjoyment of earthly things: He debars us only from that unbridled and unlawful indulgence which tends directly to the destruction of both body and soul.

But it is with us as it was with Eve. As a sort of excuse for breaking God's commandments, we represent those commandments as forbidding the touching, when they forbid only the tasting. We try to make out religion as all gloom and austerity; and ask, whether it be not something too much to expect, that, with such a nature as God has given us,

and placed in such a world as that assigned for our dwelling, the nature soliciting the very objects which are presented by the world, we should hold ourselves altogether aloof from present gratifications, and live as though we had no senses, no appetites, no desires. Ah, my brethren, the younger more especially, and such as are yet looking upon religion with distaste and dislike, be candid, and tell us whether it be not the apprehension of having to give up all that is pleasant and agreeable, and to settle into a life of moroseness and melancholy, which makes you turn with aversion from the proffers and promises of the Gospel!

But is it in pure ignorance that you thus misrepresent religion? is it through an actual misunderstanding as to what God permits, and what He prohibits? Nay, not exactly so; we must probe you a little deeper. Ye are thoroughly aware, even though you may strive to hide the knowledge from yourselves as well as from others, that God hath said, "Of every tree of the garden ye may freely eat." He hath not, ay, and ye know that He hath not, filled his creation with attractions on purpose to keep his rational creatures at perpetual strife with themselves, merely to exercise them in self-denial, and give them occasion of doing violence to all the feelings of their nature. On the contrary, it is the decision of an Apostle, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." It is the abuse, not the use of the creature which God hath forbidden. His prohibition commences only where indulgence virtually defeats its own end, the ministering to happiness: it allows all the participation which beings, conscious of immortality, can enjoy without a blush. And how, knowing this—for ye do know it; ye know that religion is not meant to turn the earth into a desert; ye know that practically it does not turn the earth into a desert, for that religious persons may have their share in all that is really bright and sweet in life, yea, and relish it the more as the gift of a heavenly Father, and enjoy it the more because enjoying it temperately and subordinately—how is it, that, knowing all this, ye contrive to justify yourselves in continued disregard of the demands and duties of religion? Ah

we will not pretend to follow you into every subterfuge, nor to dissect every falsehood. But we look at the case of our first mother: we see how, when she was inclining to disobedience, she wrought herself up into opposition to the commandment by perversely magnifying its strictness. And we can believe that you do much the same. You take pains to hide from yourselves the real facts of the case. You leave out a word, when you speak of God's permissions; you put in words, when you speak of his prohibitions. When God hath said, "Ye shall not eat of it," and ye are secretly persuaded that herein He hath only consulted for your good, ye repeat, as your version of the commandment, till perhaps you almost believe it to be true, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it."

But there was a yet worse symptom in Eve, one still more indicative of the fatal disease which was making way into her veins. It was bad enough, whether to depreciate God's permission, or to exaggerate his prohibition; but it was worse to soften away his threatenings. This showed the workings of unbelief; and there could, indeed, have been but a step between our common mother and ruin, when she had brought herself to look doubtfully on the word of the Lord. And this symptom is even more strongly marked than those which we have already examined. The declaration of God had been, "Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But what is Eve's version of this strong and unqualified declaration? "Ye shall not eat of it, lest ye die." "Lest ye die," this is what she substitutes for "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." "Lest ye die," an expression which implies a sort of chance, a contingency, a bare possibility, what might happen, or might not happen, what might happen soon, or might not happen for years—it is thus she puts a denunciation as express, as explicit, as language can furnish, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Alas now for Eve! Harboring a thought that God would not carry his threatenings into execution—and this she must have harbored, ere she could have softened these threatenings into "lest ye die"—no marvel if she gave a

ready ear to the lie of the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die." She had whispered his lie to herself, before it was uttered by Satan: the devil could do little then, and he can do little now, except as openings are made for him by those on whom he seeks to work. It was probably the incipient unbelief, manifested by the "lest ye die" of Eve, which suggested, as the best mode of attack, the "ye shall not surely die" of Satan. The devil may well hope to be believed, so soon as he sees symptoms of God's being disbelieved.

And if we could charge upon numbers, in the present day, the imitating Eve in the disparaging God's permissions, and the exaggerating his prohibitions, can we have any difficulty in continuing the parallel, now that the thing done is the making light of his threatenings? Why, what fills hell like the secretly cherished thought, that perhaps, after all, there may be no hell to fill? What is a readier, or more frequent, engine for the destruction of the soul, than a false idea of the compassion of God as sure to interfere, either to shorten the duration, or to mitigate the intensity, of future punishment, if not altogether to prevent its infliction? God hath said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But when men come to give their version of so stern and emphatic a declaration, they put it virtually into some such shape as this, "The soul should not sin, lest it die." Christ hath said, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;" men, however, practically throw this sweeping and startling affirmation into a much smoother formula, "Believe upon Christ, lest ye die."

"Lest ye die"—is this then all? is there any doubt? is it a contingency? is it a may be? "Lest ye die," when God hath said, "Ye shall surely die." "Lest ye die," when God hath said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." "Lest ye die," when God hath said, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Nay, ye may give the paragraph a smoother turn, but ye cannot give the punishment a

shorter term. Ye may soften away the expressions, ye can neither abbreviate nor mitigate the vengeance. "If we believe not," saith St. Paul, "yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." It may make punishment all the more tremendous, that there hath been the secret indulgence of a hope that God would never execute his threatenings to the letter; but, assuredly, such a hope, as being itself but the offspring of unbelief, can never produce change, in the declared purpose of the moral Governor of the universe.

And yet, such is the constancy in human perverseness, the feeling which wrought in Eve, before she eat the fatal fruit, is just that which is most powerfully at work amongst her descendants. There is not perhaps one of you, who, if he be still living in unrepented sin, is not secretly disposed to the regarding God as too gracious to visit iniquity with everlasting destruction, to the resolving into the exaggerations of the priesthood, or, at all events, into denunciations whose ends will be answered by their delivery without their execution, the tremendous announcements of a worm that dieth not, and of a fire that is not quenched.

It is not, that, if ye were pushed into an argument, or urged to a confession, ye would, in so many words, assert an expectation of such a difference between punishment as threatened, and punishment as put in force, as might make it comparatively safe for you to set at nought God's law. We do not suppose that Eve would have done this: she would not, even to herself, have acknowledged so much as this. But 'tis, that ye have a smooth way of putting the threatenings of the law; you per-

haps think that there is a great deal of metaphor in the Bible, much which was never meant to be literally understood, much which was only for local or temporary application; and so, at last, "lest ye die," an expression which just implies some measure of risk, comes to pass with you (so far as you think on such matters at all) as a very fair exposition of "Ye shall surely die," an expression denoting the most absolute certainty.

But, now, be warned by the instance of Eve. She allowed herself to give a smooth turn to the threatening of God. She invented, and never was invention so pregnant with disaster to the world, the doubtful suggestion, "Lest ye die," as a substitute for the awful affirmation, "Ye shall surely die." But, acting on the supposition that "Lest ye die," might fairly pass as the meaning of "Ye shall surely die," she "brought death into the world, and all our woe."

In her case, indeed, tremendous though the consequences were, there was a remedy: our first parents fell, but were arrested by a Mediator in their fatal descent. But in your case—if the soul be staked on the chance, that God threatens more than He will execute, and if ye find, as find ye must, that "ye shall surely die" meant what it said—no exaggeration, no metaphor—alas! there will then be no remedy for you: the hour will be passed, the day will be gone: though now a Mediator waits to make true to all penitents the bold falsehood of Satan, "Ye shall not surely die," there shall be no deliverance hereafter for such as have been presumptuous enough to sin, in the hope, or with the thought, that God will not be stern enough to strike.

SERMON VII.

SEEKING AFTER FINDING.

“ They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward.”—JEREMIAH I. 5.

The chapter from which these words are taken is filled with predictions of the overthrow of Babylon, and of the deliverance of the Jews from their haughty oppressors. There can be no doubt that these predictions had at least a primary reference to the demolition of the Chaldean Empire by Cyrus, and to the consequent emancipation of the captive citizens of Jerusalem. But, as is generally if not always the case with prophecies of this class, there would appear to be a secondary reference to the destruction of the mystic Babylon, closely associated as it will be with the restoration of the scattered tribes of Israel, and with the triumphant estate of the Christian Church.

It would seem that from the first the enemies of God and his people which one age has produced, have served as types of those who will arise in the latter days of the world; and that the judgments by which they have been overtaken, have been so constructed as to figure the final vengeance on Antichrist and his followers. Hence it is that so many prophecies appear to require as well as to admit a double fulfilment; they could hardly delineate the type and not delineate also the antitype; whilst we may believe that the Spirit, which moved the holy men of old, designed that what it inspired should serve for the instruction of remote ages as well as of near.

That the predictions in the chapter before us referred to what is yet future, as well as to what has long ago passed, will appear from a careful attention to the terms in which they are couched. In the verse immediately preceding our

text, you find this statement: “ In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God.” These words describe a great national contrition. The scattered tribes have been brought to a deep sense of their rebellion against the God of their fathers, and are inclined accordingly to return to his service. But it would hardly appear that there was any such general repentance preparatory to the return of the Jews from Babylon, though we have decisive testimony, from various parts of Scripture, that there will be antecedently to the final restoration of the Israelites to Canaan. And besides this, you will not fail to observe that the children of Israel are here combined with the children of Judah; whereas only the latter were captives in Babylon, and only the latter were emancipated by Cyrus. Whenever, as in this instance, prophecy speaks of any gathering together of the twelve tribes, of which the kingdom of Israel had ten, that of Judah only two, we seem obliged to understand it as relating to the future; there having as yet been no event which can be regarded as the predicted restoration of the ten tribes whom Shalmaneser removed.

On this and other accounts which it is not important to specify, we conclude that in its secondary, if not in its primary, application, our text is connected with that august event, the theme of so many prophecies, the centre of so many hopes, the reinstatement in Canaan of the children of Israel. And it may possibly indicate from what various and remote

districts of the earth shall the exiles be gathered, that there is to be that ignorance of the road to Jerusalem which the words before us express. We know that the whole globe is strewed with the Jews, so that you can scarcely find the country where this people, though distinct from every other, has not made itself a home. But the dwelling-place of the ten tribes is still an unsolved problem: neither the navigator in his voyagings round the world, nor the traveller in his searchings over continents, has yet lighted on the mysterious seclusion where rest the descendants of those who, for their sins, were cast out from Samaria. It may well then be, that when, moved by one impulse from above, the thousands of the chosen seed, whether in the east, or west, or north, or south, shall resolve on seeking the land of their fathers, it will be almost like the quest of some unknown region, so indistinct will be the memory, and so darkened the tradition, of the long-lost inheritance. With numbers there may be nothing beyond a vague knowledge of the direction in which Palestine must lie, so that they will be able to turn their faces thitherward, but not to determine by what road to proceed. And this is precisely what is represented in our text. The children of Israel and the children of Judah, dissolved in tears on account of their now felt ingratitude and wickedness, have turned themselves towards Jerusalem, but are still forced to inquire the way. One seems to behold a band of the exiles weeping and nevertheless exulting, penetrated with sorrow for sins, and yet animated with the persuasion that the Lord was about to make bare his arm and gather home his banished ones. They press along the desert, they crowd to the shore; and of every one whom they meet they demand, in a voice of eagerness and anxiety, Where, where is our home, the beautiful land which God gave to our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

But you will readily judge that it cannot be on this, the literal sense or fulfilment of the text, that we design to speak at any length. You are always prepared for our regarding the Jews as a typical people, and finding in the events of their history emblems of what occurs to the Christian Church. We shall therefore at once detach the text from

its connexion with the Jews, whether in their past deliverance from Babylon, or their yet future restoration to Canaan, and consider it as descriptive of what may be found amongst Christians, who have to quit a moral bondage, and find their way to a spiritual Zion.

The singularity of the passage, when thus interpreted or applied, lies in the face of the inquirer being towards Zion, whilst he is yet forced to ask what road he ought to take. "They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." They are in the right road, or at least are advancing in the right direction; but, nevertheless, whether through ignorance, or through fear of even the possibility of mistake, they continually make inquiries as to the path to be followed. We think that this circumstance, if considered as to be exemplified in our own spiritual history, will furnish abundant material for interesting and profitable discourse. It is a circumstance which indicates such honesty of purpose in the inquirer, such vigilance, such circumspection, such anxiety to be right, and such dread of being wrong, as should distinguish every Christian, though too often we look for them in vain. And, at the same time, we evidently learn that persons are not always fair judges of their spiritual condition; they may be asking the way like those who are in ignorance and darkness, and all the while their faces may be towards Zion. Let it be our endeavor to compass different classes within our present discourse; considering in the first place, the case of those who, though going right, suppose themselves going wrong; and, in the second place, that of those who believe themselves right, but yet desire further assurance; for of both classes it may equally be said, "They ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward."

Now it is the object of such parables as that of the tares and the wheat, or that of the great net let down into the sea, and which gathered of all kinds, bad as well as good, to teach us that there is to be a mixture in the visible Church, and that it is not men's business to attempt a separation. We are all too much disposed to exercise a spirit of judgment, to pronounce opinions on the condition of our fellow-men, whether the living or the dead, just as

though we had access to God's book, and could infallibly read its registered decisions. But there is every thing in the Bible to warn us against this spirit of judgment, and to urge us, on the contrary, to a spirit of charity; our inability to read the heart, which is the prerogative of God alone, being given as a sufficient reason why we should refrain from passing verdicts; and our duty as members of the same mystic body, being set forth as that of hoping all things, bearing one another's burdens, rather than scrutinizing one another's faults.

And a very comforting remembrance it is, that we are not to stand or fall by human decision, that our portion for eternity is not to be settled by what men think of us here; for so furious is the spirit of religious party, and so determined are numbers on making their own favorite dogma the alone passport to heaven, that many of the most lowly followers of Christ would be given over to perdition, and many of the most arrogant boasters chartered for everlasting life, were the verdicts of the Christian world to be final, and no appeal to lie to a higher tribunal. We always think that there is something very touching in those words of the Redeemer, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them." It is as much as to say, the world may not know them; in the judgment of men, many pass for my sheep who are not, and many who are, may be excluded from my flock; but I, I who cannot be deceived, I know my sheep, and will infallibly distinguish them at last from the goats.

But not only are men likely to deliver a false judgment upon others, and therefore bound to confine their chief scrutiny to themselves, it is further very possible that they may form a wrong opinion of their own spiritual state, not only, as you all know, in concluding themselves safe whilst in danger, but, as is perhaps less suspected, in concluding themselves in danger whilst safe. In his more private ministrations amongst his people, a clergyman will not unfrequently find the case of a depressed and disconsolate individual, who obtains none of the comforts, though he is all alive to the duties, of religion. It gives him no surprise that there should be such cases; for he knows that they are expressly provided for in Scripture,—as, for ex-

ample, in that passage of the prophet Isaiah, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Here the case is evidently supposed of religion existing in its genuineness, though in none of its comforts: the man fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of his servant; but, all the while, is surrounded by impenetrable darkness, even darkness which may be felt. And the direction to such a man, a direction to stay himself upon his God, is one which clearly assumes the reality of his piety, and as clearly asserts that he is not in danger, because not in light.

But whilst the minister is quite prepared for these cases, and quite aware that the spiritual gloom is no index of the spiritual state, he finds them singularly difficult and perplexing; and that, too, because they are commonly the cases of parties suffering from bodily disease, disease perhaps of the nerves, and whom that very circumstance incapacitates for judging with accuracy their spiritual state. If, through God's blessing on the prescriptions of the physician, a more wholesome tone be given to the nervous system, brighter views will quickly be reached of the condition of the soul: on the other hand, if the sickness increase, the moral darkness will become thicker and thicker: and whilst the minister is thoroughly assured that all these alternations are but proofs how the body can act upon the mind, and therefore noways affect the spiritual estate, the patient will take them as so many evidences of advance or decline in genuine religion.

We know nothing to be done, in these and the like cases, but the endeavoring to shew men how utterly distinct are the reality of religion and its comforts; and how independent is that which is to save them on the frames and feelings of which they may be conscious. They are downcast because faith seems weak, or elated because it seems strong; whereas it is not faith which is to save them, but Christ; and whilst faith, whether in itself or its evidences, may change from day to day, Christ changes not, but is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." And we always think it safe to tell those who are spiritually depressed,

that their very depression is no mean argument of their safety; for so unnatural is it to man to feel anxious for his soul, that, wheresoever there, is the anxiety, we recognize a higher agency, even a Divine, as having wrought to excite the solicitude. It certainly follows, that the man who is depressed as to his state before God, must be anxious as to that state; and we know not how, as a corrupt and fallen creature, he was to have become thus anxious, had not God's Spirit acted on his conscience, and commenced in him a work of moral renovation. So that there ought to be comfort even in the very wretchedness: you would not have been thus disquieted had you been left to yourselves; and that you have not been left to yourselves should prove to you that God is not willing that you should perish, nay, that He has already undertaken the bringing you to Himself.

And over and above these cases of depression, in which one cause or another weaves darkness round a man, so that, whilst his face is towards Zion, he cannot perceive that he is on the road to the heavenly city, we nothing doubt that there are many instances of parties, who have begun in true religion, and nevertheless think that the first step has not been taken. It is not always, nay, it is not, we believe, often, that conversion is suddenly effected, nor through some special instrumentality which fixes, as it were, the date of the change. In the majority of cases, the change, we are inclined to believe, is gradual, imperceptibly effected, so that, although the man becomes at length conscious of a great moral alteration, he cannot tell you when it commenced, nor by what steps it went on. There is no one thing more distinguishable from another, than is the converted state from the unconverted; but the transition from the one to the other may be accomplished by such slow degrees, that the individual, who is its subject, shall not know with precision when or where the first movement took place.

And we rejoice in the assurance that many, who would not venture to think themselves on the way to Zion, are actually walking in the direction of that city. They who have a sincere wish to be enabled to forsake sin, and who are endeavoring accordingly to break away

from evil habits; they who tremble at God's word, though as yet they have not found a shelter from its threatenings; they who are so moved by a sense of danger that they earnestly inquire, "What must we do to be saved?" though they have not yet heard the answer in the depths of the heart—on all these the minister of the Gospel looks with great hopefulness: they may not themselves be aware of their having actually entered the heavenward path; but he considers their anxiety, their fear, their solicitude, as so many evidences of their having begun in religion, and he anticipates, with indescribable pleasure, their being "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Regarding conversion as a gradual work, a work in which "one soweth and another reapeth," we do not look on those, who are evidently confirmed believers, as the only travellers towards the celestial city: we rejoice in thinking that there are numbers, in whom the moral change is not yet distinctly marked, but who are nevertheless in the act of passing the strait gate.

Yea, with every wish to avoid giving encouragement where there is yet needed warning, we do feel authorized in taking fears for the soul, and desires for its safety, as evidences of a man's being in the pathway of life. We might almost say, that, in religion, anxiety to begin is itself a beginning: the seeking the road is the being in the road: and though the inquirers themselves may not venture to think that they have yet done more than inquire, oh, we can regard them as having already virtually found that of which they are in quest: they may only consider themselves as asking the way to Zion; but we can feel that they are of those who ask the way to Zion "with their faces thitherward."

But let us pass on to the case of men, in regard of whom there can be no doubt that they have made a beginning, and let us see what our text may indicate as to these more advanced characters. We may justly suppose that the parties, to whom the prophecy originally applied, had set out on the journey from Babylon to Zion: they had commenced; but, either through finding themselves in places where different roads met, or through desire to be more and more as-

sured of being right, they still ask the way to the land of their fathers. And we hardly know where to begin, in pointing out to you how illustrative this should be of the conduct of the Christian, as he journeys towards the heavenly inheritance. There are many things indicated by this asking the way to Zion, on which it would be well that your attention should be turned.

Let it first be observed, that a Christian should never be too confident; that he should never take for granted, as a point on which there could not be doubt, that he is indeed "a new creature," and on the high road to the kingdom. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," is a precept which cannot be inappropriate at any stage of the Christian life; for where a mistake is so possible, and where the consequences of a mistake are so disastrous, it is the part of common prudence to be frequently considering whether or not we have been deceiving ourselves, having a name to live, whilst yet dead in God's sight. We have no wish, indeed, to debar you from the enjoyment of the privileges of the Gospel: we are only anxious that your title to these privileges should be clear; and this, we are persuaded, it cannot be, except through a frequent process of close self-examination. For it is not a general sense of your election unto life which should satisfy you of your safety. This may be, and often is, nothing more than a suggestion of Satan to blind you to your danger. Do you find an increasing delight in secret prayer? does sin seem to you more and more odious? are you more and more penetrated by the exceeding great love of God in giving his Son to die for your sakes? is holiness becoming your happiness, duty your privilege, and heaven the very home of your affections? These, and the like, questions are those which you should be frequently proposing to yourselves. On the answer to these, an answer given as in the sight of a heart-searching God, should rest your answer to the most momentous of all questions, "Are we on the way to Zion?"

And if the answer to this last question can only be come at through the answer to a series of inquiries, each of which may be said to need, from its very nature, the being daily proposed, it necessarily follows, that you ought to be imi-

tating the children of Judah and Israel, asking as to the road to Zion, however you may hope that your faces are already thitherward. Can this be the way to Zion in which I am? Ask the dead, who have reached that heavenly city: with one voice they will tell you, that, if it be the right way, it is a way of self-denial, leading you through mortified lusts, and over subjugated affections; and then judge ye whether or not it be such a way in which you are found. Ask the living, of whom you have best cause to believe that they are heirs of the kingdom: they will assure you that the way is one of faith and obedience, every step of which is an advance in the knowledge of your own depraved hearts, and in the sense of the worth and sufficiency of Christ; and then judge ye whether or not this can be the way in which you are walking. Ask the Bible, on whose pages the Holy Spirit hath mapped out the path, and it will tell you that the way is a narrow way, which will not admit of your encumbering yourselves with perishable things, but which can be traversed only by those who lay aside every weight; and then judge ye whether ye have obtained the description of a path which ye yourselves are pursuing. And ask ye, yet further, of God. This seems to have been the practice of the Psalmist; for you may remember his words, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." By diligent and fervent prayer, make inquiry of God as to the road which conducts to the place where He dwells. And the answer, to this inquiry, an answer, which, if there be sincerity in the inquirer, shall certainly not be withheld, will expose to you the deceitfulness of all hope of reaching Zion, which is not founded on the appropriation of the merits of the Redeemer, the reality of that appropriation being proved by the produced fruits of righteousness; and then determine whether such answer ought to leave you assured that you are not self-deceived, when concluding yourselves in the heavenward path.

But of whomsoever the question be asked, we wish you clearly to understand that the question itself, the question as to the way to Zion, is not a question to be put by none but beginners in religion,

who have yet to learn the very elements of Christianity, and to take the first step in separation from the world. It is a question for the most advanced Christian amongst you, if not because he may be ignorant of the way and therefore need direction, yet because he requires to be reminded of the way, that he may compare his own course with the chart, and see whether he have not wandered, turning aside either to the right hand or the left. For if it may be, as we have said that it is, by almost imperceptible steps that a man passes from the side of the world to that of God, he may also decline, by almost imperceptible steps, towards that which he hath left—the swerving being at each point so slight as scarce to be observed, although a wide angle may at length result from successive inconsiderable flexions. And if indeed it be possible, that a man, who has entered on the right road, may, through want of constant self-examination, bend from that road, and yet hardly suspect the departure, how important that Christians should imitate the Jews, who, with their faces towards Zion, were still inquiring the road.

It is not doubt, but caution, which we would teach you; not the being always beginning, but the being always diligent to “make your calling and election sure.” We do not wish you to be always uncertain as to whether or not your faces are turned towards Zion; but we wish you to understand that their being so turned is a reason in favor of, not a reason against, your frequently inquiring the heavenly path. It is not sufficient that they be turned; the great matter is, that they be kept turned; and whilst such is your nature, that, without constant vigilance, the direction may be gradually changed, and yet appear to you the same—even as the eyes of a well-drawn portrait follow you as you move, and so might persuade you that you had not moved at all—it is evidently bound on you, by your regard for your safety, that you be always ascertaining the landmarks, in place of judging by your apparent position. Is my life the life of a believer in Christ? is faith producing piety, humility, charity, patience? These are the very milestones, the pillars, the crosses, on the road. If I search not for these, I must remain without sufficient evidence of my being on

the road; and, therefore, is an inquiry as to the way, in order to the determining whether it be the way in which I walk, the only inquiry by which, at any stage, I can ascertain my safety. In short, I am not to conclude that I must be in the right way, because my face, as I think, is Zionwards: I am to conclude that my face is Zionwards, by examining my path, comparing it with that which Scripture delineates as conducting to heaven, and proving that the two are one and the same.

It may not have been from actual ignorance, that they, who had been delivered from Babylon, asked, with so much urgency, the road to Jerusalem. They were on the road, and, though half blinded with the tears of contrition, may have felt that they could scarcely go wrong. But they would make assurance doubly sure. It was a pleasure to them to ask the name of every valley which they crossed, and of every hill which they ascended, and to receive a reply which showed them that their course was indeed towards Zion. And occasionally they stood where different roads met—one perhaps apparently smooth, and leading through rich smiling scenes; and the other rugged, and going off towards a dreary waste—what shall they do but pause till they can clearly determine which road leads to Zion? not wishing to follow the attractive path, if it do not; eager to attempt the repulsive, if it do.

And in all this, we again and again tell you, they were examples to the Christian in his journey to the spiritual Canaan. He can never be too sure that he is right. He may have no reason to suspect that he is wrong; but he is wrong, if, on that account alone, he conclude himself right. Let him be always questioning, questioning himself, questioning others, inquiring of the Bible, inquiring of God. What is this mountain before me? is it on the map? what is this valley which I have to cross, this stream which I have to ford? are they what I was to meet with, or do they show that I have wandered? And here the road divides—which turn am I to take? what is to decide me in this perplexity? Let me be firm on one point—that it is the direction of the road, not its quality, by which I will be determined. The road which leads to heaven, that is my

road, be it, or be it not, strewed with the rocks, and swept by the torrents. Other paths may look more inviting: but I have nothing to do except with their termination: if they conduct not to Zion, I would not venture to follow them even a solitary step, though they might lead me to riches, or honors, or pleasures. This it is to imitate the emancipated Jews. Weep with them if you will; for the sins of every day furnish but too much matter for godly sorrow. Turn your faces, with them, towards Zion: for assuredly this is not your rest, and ye are but strangers and pilgrims below. But be always on the watch, lest ye miss the narrow path; lest, through ignorance, you take the road which looks plainest, or, through indolence, that which seems smoothest, or, through self-indulgence, that which promises most of present advantage; and thus, let this description be literally applicable to yourselves, "They ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward."

But there is yet more to be gathered from this description, when considered as that of a believer in Christ. We have hitherto merely affirmed that, in order to guard against mistake, where mistake would be fatal, it must become the Christian to be always inquiring the way to Zion, like one who knows that he may be deceived, even when to all appearance he has long followed the right path. But we will now suppose him certified as to the direction in which he is proceeding, certified that his face is towards Zion, and nevertheless busying himself with inquiries as to the way. And what would this mark? What should we have to learn from the representation of a Christian as inquiring the way to Zion, though assured that he had been long proceeding in that way?

My brethren, Christianity is that in which no man can be too advanced to study the alphabet. It is that to whose very elements the greatest proficient should often recur, not indeed as though he were to be always a beginner: but because what he begins with he cannot exhaust; and because what he gathers as he proceeds, only fits him the more for understanding and appreciating that with which he commenced. The simple and fundamental doctrines of our holy religion,—the doctrines of hu-

man corruption, of the renewing power of God's Spirit, of the incarnation of the Eternal Word, and of the atonement effected by a Mediator,—these, which may be said to shew the way to Zion, present continually new material for the contemplation and instruction of the Christian. There is a sense in which there is no getting beyond the very alphabet of Christianity; that alphabet will always be beyond us; any one of its letters being as a mighty hieroglyphic which the prayerful student may partially decipher, but the most accomplished scholar never thoroughly expound.

And there cannot be a worse symptom, whether in an individual or in a congregation, than that of distaste for the elementary truths and facts of Christianity. We regard with great anxiety those professing Christians, whose appetites must be stimulated by novelties and varieties in religion, and to whom it is not always a feast, always like "good news from a far country," to hear of the exceeding love of God in giving his dear Son as a propitiation for sin. We are not indeed unmindful of what St. Paul says to the Hebrews, whom he exhorts, that, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," they should go on to perfection; and we fully believe that a Christian may err through confining himself to the elements, in place of striving to comprehend the whole range of truth. Whatsoever God has been pleased to reveal, should be made the subject of study; and we will not desecrate the name of humility by giving it to that temper which would seal up half the Bible, as too obscure to be read with advantage, or too perplexed for the generality of Christians. It is evidently, however, only the resting in "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," which is condemned by St. Paul: he would have us go on to perfection; but but not so as to forget the principles:—who ever soared higher than this Apostle? and yet who ever lingered more fondly on the very threshold of the system, beholding the cross with the earnestness and affection of one who felt it to be the centre of life to a fallen and helpless world? We are to leave the principles, so as to be on the advance in the search after truth: but we are never so to leave them as though we had done

with them, and had no further need to recur to their study. Indeed, in this sense, it is impossible to leave the principles; for the heights and depths of Christian doctrine are but the first elements expanded: the simple truths are the germs of the mysterious: and it is the little cloud which at length spreads, like that seen by the Prophet's servant, into an impenetrable vast, though only that it may refresh and fertilize the earth.

We may therefore justly again speak to you of the badness of the symptom, when a Christian grows weary of the first truths of Christianity, nay, when he is not frequent in dwelling on those truths, as furnishing instruction which he cannot outstrip, and consolation which he cannot exhaust. Tell me not of a man who understands all mysteries, and who is so engaged with abstruse and loftier doctrines, that he may leave to young converts the introductory facts which he has long ago examined, and with which, as placed at the entrance to the heavenward path, he can have no concern when some progress has been made. We dare affirm of the path, that it is not so direct that what we leave remains actually behind us, but rather so winding that what we leave seems frequently before us. In advancing, we apparently return to the same point: he who has taken a lofty flight, if it have indeed been through a region of Christian truth, will commonly find himself, at its close, at the foot of the cross. At least, if he return from the flight, and feel, on looking at the cross, as though it were a dull and common-place object, in comparison of what he had beheld, we may be sure that he has been expatiating in some region of cold and barren speculation, where there may be religion for the intellect, but none for the heart.

We give it, therefore, as no bad criterion for those who have long made profession of godliness,—have we delight in the simple truths of the Gospel, or do we find no pleasure but in an abstruse and argumentative theology, where the understanding is tasked, or the reason appealed to, the imagination dazzled? What preaching contents us? Must we have the logical speaker, who leads us on, by a series of well-contrived steps, to some unexpected conclusion? or the brilliant, who, by his vivid delineations, can charm

us into the belief of truths which we had hitherto overlooked? or is it sufficient to engage our attention and make us all alive to the worth of the ordinance of preaching, that the minister speaks, simply and warmly, on the elements of Christianity, on truths with which we have long been familiar, which have been taught us from infancy, and which are little more than the inscriptions which point the manslayer to the city of refuge? It will be thus with those who are pressing "towards the mark for the prize of their high calling in Christ." The giant in Christ, if we may vary the simile, is so truly the babe in Christ, as always to be leaning upon Him for support; and the sounds which were sweet to him in the first days of spiritual life, will be melodious ever after; not only because music remembered as heard in childhood always steals thrillingly on the ear, as though it were a voice from the tomb, but because the well-known strain breathes to him of all he holds precious, and falls liquidly as a voice from the firmament, inspiring the hope which is "full of immortality."

By this, then, amongst other tests, let those who think themselves advanced in Christianity try their spiritual condition. What ear have they for simple truths simply delivered? In their private studies, what pleasure have they in meditating the first principles of the Gospel? do they find those first principles inexhausted, inexhaustible? or is it always to deeper doctrines that they turn, as though it were only when quite out of their depth, that they gain a resting-place for the soul? I admire, I greatly admire, the picture of a Christian, as furnished by the prophetic sketch of the Jews in our text! He is a man who is never weary of hearing of the way to Zion, though his face is towards the heavenly city, and he may perhaps already behold its battlements on the horizon. I know not how far the exiles had advanced when they might first be described by the prediction before us. But there is nothing to limit the prediction to one point rather than to another of the journey. For anything we know, those blue hills in the distance may be the mountains which are "round about Jerusalem," and the waters which they are crossing may

have flowed by its ruined walls; and yet, as though they had but just quitted Babylon, the wanderers are asking the way, loving to be told what they know, and delighting to hear, though not needing to be taught.

It is thus with the believer. What was glad news to him at the beginning, is glad news to him to the end: the prescribed way to safety, through repentance and faith, cannot be exhibited without fixing his attention, exciting his gratitude, and animating his hope. Let him be even on the border of the land, let him be even on the brink of the Jordan, and nothing will accord better with his feelings, nothing will more minister to his peace, than discourse, not on the New Jerusalem itself, but on the path by which it must be reached. The minister stands by a dying Christian, that, in the hour of dissolution, he may whisper words of comfort. And what hath he spoken of, that there is so bright a smile on the cheek of the sufferer, that the sunken eye is suddenly lit up as though with fire from above? Surely, say the bystanders, he hath spoken of the diadem, and the white robe, and the golden harp, of the palaces of immortality, and of the raptures of those who have cast off the burden of the flesh. Ah, no!—he hath spoken as he would have done to the young inquirer in religion. He hath spoken of the Divine love in finding a ransom: he hath spoken of the blood of Christ as cleansing from all sin: he hath spoken of the intercession of Christ as securing all blessing. And if surprise be expressed that such elementary discourse should be cheering to a man as he almost entered heaven, the minister will have only to reply, that the true believer is one, who, to the very end, resembles the Jews as they journeyed from Babylon to Canaan, and who asked “the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward.”

But there is yet one more particular on which we wish to insist; not that we think that we shall then have exhausted the text; but that what we have still to advance is of so practical a character, that we could not be justified in its omission. We would direct your attention to what we may call the honesty of purpose displayed by the Jews, and hold it up for imitation to all who profess to be seeking the kingdom of God.

The Jew had his face turned towards Zion, whilst he was inquiring the road: if he did not know the precise path, he knew the direction in which the city lay; and he was looking in the direction, when he asked what way he should take. He might have been looking in another direction: his eye might have been to the city which he had to quit, and not to that to which he had to go; and then there would have been good reason to suspect that he preferred the remaining in Babylon, though he professed a desire to remove to Jerusalem. But as his face was already Zionwards, he gave evidence of being in earnest: he had done as much as he could do with his amount of information, and there could be no doubt that he was sincere in his inquiry for more.

We have a right to require and expect a similar conduct from all those who ask of us the way to heaven. There is such a thing as asking the way to Zion with the face towards Babylon; and if there be this dissimulation—for no milder word will express the precise truth—in vain will the preacher point out the road, and urge the traveller to decision and dispatch. We fear it to be true of numbers amongst you, that they ask the way to heaven, but keep looking towards the world. What interpretation are we to put upon your appearance Sabbath after Sabbath in the sanctuary of God, if not that it professes a wish for instruction, a desire to be informed how, as immortal creatures, you may escape lasting misery, and secure lasting happiness? We cannot, in the judgment of charity, put a less favorable construction on your coming up to God's house; we cannot regard it as a mere compliance with custom, or as a mode of passing away time, which might otherwise hang heavy on your hands. Every man who frequents the public ordinances of the Church is certainly to be considered as thereby, if by nothing else, asking of those whom God hath set as guides to the wandering, by what way he may reach the kingdom of heaven.

But it is in vain that the answer is continually given, and that, on successive opportunities, the minister of Christ holds forth the chart, and delineates the path. And the great reason of this is, that there is no honesty of purpose in the

inquirer, no real intention of acting on the information which he professes to want. His face is towards the world at the very moment that, with all the show of a traveller towards Zion, he is making inquiries as to a path and conveyance. And we would have you distinctly understand, that there is a certain part which the unconverted man has to perform if he hope for conversion; and that whilst this is undone, he has no right to look for the visitations of grace. It may not be in his power to find for himself the pathway of life; still less to take a step on that pathway when found. But he may ascertain the direction in which Zion lies, and he may be looking in that direction, if not advancing. It is quite idle to say that he knows not the direction: he knows it to be the exact opposite to that in which he naturally looks; to turn his eyes from the world is, as he must be thoroughly aware, to turn them towards them.

And we expect this from every one of you who, in any shape, puts the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" We expect him to be an imitator of the Jews who, if they asked the way to Zion, asked it with "their faces thitherward." What mean you by coming to God's house, not merely with your affections set on earthly things, but without an effort to disengage them? with no intention of entering on a course of labor and self-denial, if such should be prescribed? but rather with the secret determination of persevering a while longer in courses which you know to be wrong? What mean you by this hypocrisy, this double dealing? What mean you by this imitation of Lot's wife, who, if she had her foot towards Zoar, had her face towards Sodom? Show that you are in earnest by the direction in which you look; otherwise it is in vain to ask guidance as to the way in which to walk. The man who is in earnest will set himself at once to the turning his back on what conscience tells him to be wrong, or the Bible declares to be offensive to God. He will make it his business to forsake pursuits or associates, however agreeable, which draw him to the visible world, and to enter upon duties whose distinct tendency is towards the invisible. And this, at the least, is the setting his face heavenwards, a preliminary, as we are

bold to affirm, to his being enabled to direct his course heavenwards.

For it is an indisputable rule in the dealings of God, to give more grace in proportion as that already given is improved. He hath given strength to turn the eye—turn it, or never look for strength to move the foot. And if you would know whether it be an indifferent thing, that you continue asking the way to heaven with your face towards the world, you have only to refer to the writings of Ezekiel, where God Himself expresses his sense of the duplicity. "Every one of the house of Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me, I the Lord will answer him by myself, and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb." The case here supposed is precisely that which we are forced to regard as frequent amongst ourselves, the case of a man who, with his heart full of the idols of the world, with the stumbling-block of his iniquity put "before his face,"—so far is he from any effort to put it behind his back,—comes to inquire of the prophet concerning God, as though he wished to know how his favor might be gained. And God takes upon Himself the giving him his answer, an answer expressive of singular indignation, and more than common vengeance. That man is to be made "a sign and a proverb," a sign, as was the wife of Lot, to whom we have already referred, who was turned into a pillar of salt, that the wavering and hypocritical of all after-ages might be admonished and warned.

We can, therefore, but urge on you the taking heed how you come to inquire of the prophet, with no sincere purpose of acting on his directions. See to it that ye turn your face towards heaven; for this is in the power of all of you, through those workings of God's Spirit, of which every breast is the scene. Ye cannot turn the heart, but ye can turn the face. Ye can turn the back to the world, which is to turn the face towards heaven; and it is God's ordinary course to give the new heart to those who prove that they desire it, by looking away from all which the old

heart is prone to love and prefer. Then inquire the way to heaven; then, when your sincerity is proved, and you have shown, by your striving to obey God up to the measure of your knowledge and ability, that you would improve a greater measure if mercifully vouchsafed.

Thus will you be doing as did the children of Judah: and you shall find that, directed as they were into the right, though perhaps a rough path, you shall reach at length the land which God promised to your fathers, and sit down delightedly in the long-lost inheritance.

SERMON VIII

THE BIRD'S NEST.

^a If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."—DEUTERONOMY xxii. 6, 7.

The question of St. Paul, after quoting a precept from the law as to muzzling the ox when it treadeth out the corn, will here naturally recur to your minds, "Doth God take care for oxen?" On hearing our text, almost every one will be disposed to exclaim, "Doth God take care for birds?" Not that the question is meant to convey any doubt as to the Divine care for the inferior creation. We know that God "feedeth the young ravens that call upon him," and that, though five sparrows are sold for two farthings, "not one of them is forgotten before God." But when St. Paul proposes his question in regard of oxen, it is not to insinuate that it was beneath God to take care of oxen, or that the precept, which he quotes, was not designed to have a literal application. What he wishes to have understood, is simply, that the law had other and higher ends in view, besides the mere securing for the laboring ox a share in the produce of his labors. He instructs us that such a precept was meant to have a figurative, or symbolical, as well as a literal interpretation; that, whilst, in obedience to it, the ox

was not to be muzzled when treading out the corn, in further obedience, a due maintenance was to be afforded to the preachers of the Gospel. "Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."

In thus amplifying a precept of the law, St. Paul may be said to have furnished a general rule as to the mode in which similar precepts should be interpreted and applied. We are not to regard them as having to do merely with the specific case to which the words address themselves: we are rather to search for the principle involved in the law, or on which the law is founded; to examine in what other cases the same principle will hold good; and to conclude, that, in every such case, the law was intended to be equally binding.

It is thus that we shall endeavor to proceed with that very peculiar law which we have taken as our present subject of discourse. We are very much struck with this law, not because it has

to do with a matter apparently trifling, and unworthy to be the object of Divine legislation, but because there is annexed to it the same promise as to commandments of the highest import and requirement. For you will observe that length of days, the very blessing which was to flow from giving to parents the honor prescribed by the fifth commandment, is held forth as a recompense to obedience in this matter of a bird and her nest. "That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." The commandment may have to do with a trivial thing; but it is evident enough that it cannot be a trivial commandment: indeed, no commandment can be which proceeds from God, because what is indifferent, or unimportant, so long as it is not the subject of a command, changes its whole character the moment that it is.

But, apart from this general consideration, on which we may find occasion hereafter to insist, the mere circumstance that the prolongation of life is set forth as the result of obedience, should satisfy you that the precept before us is not to be passed over as requiring little notice, but should rather be studied as fraught with instruction, conveying, like that expounded by St. Paul, figurative lessons of the very widest application. Dismiss, then, the thought which, not unnaturally, may have been excited by the first announcement of the text, the thought of there being almost something to provoke a smile in a bird's nest giving subject for a sermon. Let us endeavor to ascertain on what principles the precept before us is founded, what dispositions it inculcates and cherishes; and we shall find that there is no cause for surprise, in the annexment of a promise of long life to obedience to the direction, "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, thou shalt not take the dam with the young."

Now you will see at once, that, had the precept been of a more stringent character, it might, in some sense, have been more easily vindicated and explained. Had it forbidden altogether the meddling with the nest, had it required that not only should the mother-bird be let go, but that neither the young birds, nor the eggs, should be taken, it would at once have been said that God was graciously protecting the inferior crea-

tion, and forbidding man to act towards them with any kind of cruelty. But the precept permits the taking the nest: it does not even hint that it might be better to let the nest alone: it simply confines itself to protecting the parent-bird, and thus allows, if it does not actually direct, what may be thought an inhuman thing, the carrying off the young to the manifest disappointment and pain of the mother.

It should not however be unobserved, that the precept does not touch the case in which there is an actual looking for the nest. It is not a direction as to what should be done, if a nest were found after diligent search; but only as to what should be done, if a nest were found by mere chance or accident. You will observe how the precept is introduced, "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground." The nest was to be in some exposed situation, where it could not well be overlooked; and this circumstance may have had to do with the construction of the commandment.—Without pretending to argue that God would have forbidden the searching for the nest, it is highly probable that there was something significant in this direction as to taking the nest, in the particular case when that nest had been unwisely placed. We are sure, from various testimonies of Scripture, that God has designed to instruct us in and through the inferior creation, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, being often appealed to when men have to be taught and admonished. And we know not, therefore, that there can be any thing far-fetched in supposing, that, by sanctioning a sort of injury to the bird, which had built its nest in an insecure place, God meant to teach us, that, if we will not take due precautions for our own safety, we are not to expect the shield of his protection. There would hardly have been such emphasis laid on the nest's "chancing to be in the way," if it had not been designed that we should observe how unwisely the nest had been placed, and draw some inference as to the need of prudence on our own part, if we hope to experience the guardianship of God.

This, however, only goes to the explaining why there was any permission for taking the nest, when you might

rather have expected, that, had God legislated on such a matter at all, it would have been for the protection of the young birds as well as of the old. But now, as to the permission itself, we may throw together some general considerations which go to the showing that there was great significance in the allowing that only the young should be taken, whilst the old were let go. Were not the Israelites hereby taught to be moderate in their desires? The first impulse would be to seize the old bird with the young, and thus secure as much as possible. But this is nothing better than the impulse of covetousness; and it was like giving a lesson against covetousness, a lesson so constructed as to be capable of being reproduced in great variety of circumstances, when the finder of a prize, who might fancy himself at liberty to appropriate the whole, was required to content himself with a part. And, over and above the lesson against covetousness, there was also in the precept a lesson against recklessness or waste. For to have taken possession of the old bird together with the young, would have been to have destroyed, in that case, the further multiplication of the kind: in certain states of the animal creation, it would have been almost tantamount to the extinguishing a species; and in every state it was doing as much as, at the moment, could be done towards preventing a species from increasing on the earth.

The precept set itself against this improvident and wasteful appropriation of God's creatures. It required man, whilst supplying his present wants, to have due regard to his future; yea, and to the wants of others, as well as to his own: it virtually said to him, Take what is enough for thee to-day, in taking the nest; but the old bird may build another nest, which may be useful to another, or to thyself another day; therefore, "thou shalt in any wise let the dam go." We do not of course mean that such a lesson was to hold good merely in the particular instance. On the contrary, there is a general principle thus shown to be involved in the precept; and we are supposing that the precept was constructed for the purpose of embodying and enforcing such principles. There is a reckless disposition in many, a profuse expenditure of whatsoever they can

lay hands on, little regard being had to future wants, and the very means of supplying them being often improvidently and unnecessarily anticipated. Does not the precept before us distinctly condemn all such prodigality, extravagance, and want of due forethought? You may apply the principle to a hundred cases. Whenever men live upon the capital, when the interest would suffice; whenever they recklessly consume all their earnings, though those earnings might enable them to lay something by; when, so long as, by eager grasping, they can secure what they like for themselves, they are utterly indifferent as to interfering with the supplies and enjoyments of others—in every such case, they are violating the precept before us; they are taking the old bird with the young; as, on the other hand, by treating as a sin any thing like wastefulness, by a prudent management of the gifts and mercies of God, by such a wise husbandry of resources as shall prove a consciousness that the Divine liberality in place of sanctioning extravagance, should be a motive to economy, they may be said to be virtually obeying the precept; they are taking the young, but letting the dam go.

And though these are but general considerations, which can hardly be said to carry you into the interior of the commandment, so as to show you why long life should be annexed to obedience, they may yet suffice to divest that commandment of all the air of trivial legislation with which you might be ready, on its first announcement, to consider it invested. True, it is only about a bird's nest that the ever-living God is here delivering a law. But if there be couched in that law denunciations alike of the covetous and the spendthrift, so that every one, who studied its spirit, would find himself directed to a right use of God's creatures, surely enough has already been said to do away all surprise at finding in the Jewish code such a direction as this, "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, thou shalt in any wise take to thee the young, and let the dam go."

But now let us look more narrowly into the reasons of the precept: we shall probably find, if we examine the peculiarities of the case, that the com-

mandment before us has a yet more direct and extensive application. It could only be, you will observe, the attachment of the mother-bird to its young, which, for the most part, would put it in the power of the finder of the nest to take both together. If the mother-bird cared only for her own safety, if she were indifferent to her offspring, she would take flight in any possible danger, and leave the inmates of the nest a prey to any enemy. But her powerful affection towards her defenceless little ones keeps her close to them, makes her hover about them when threatened with danger, and even urges her to resist an assailant, whom, under any other circumstances, she would have fled from precipitately. So that, except in some rare instances, it is nothing but parental affection which would put it in man's power to take the old with the young: the young cannot make their escape, but the mother-bird might; and the mother-bird would, if she were not the mother-bird, and moved by the strongest instinct to stay with her brood.

And when you bring this circumstance into the account, you can hardly doubt that one great reason why God protected the mother-bird by an express commandment, was, that He might point out the excellence of parental affection, and teach us that we were not to take advantage of such an affection, in order to any injury to the parties who displayed it. He would not have the mother-bird injured, when it was only her affection as a mother which gave the opportunity of injuring her. Under other circumstances, this mother-bird might be taken; there was no law against that; but whensoever it was her attachment to her young which exposed her to the being taken, then God interposed with a distinct prohibition, and commanded that she should not be taken. Surely it may justly be said that God hereby threw a kind of sacredness around parental affection, and delivered moreover a solemn injunction against our ever making use of the power, which such an affection may give us, to work mischief to the party by whom it is displayed. This is one of the most important of the points of view under which the text can be considered; and we shall strive, by some general illustrations, to

put you well in possession of the precise facts of the case.

You must be all quite aware, that the affection which one party bears to another, may be taken advantage of, and that, too, to his manifest detriment. For example, circumstances place the child of another in your power; you are about to oppress or ill use that child: the parent entreats: you agree to release the child, but only on conditions with which the parent would never have complied, had it not been for the strong pleadings of natural affection—what do you do in such a case but make use of a power, derived solely from the parent's love, to effect the parent's injury? you seize, so to speak, the mother-bird, when it is only her being the mother-bird which has given you the opportunity of seizure.

This is a precise case in point; but you may say that it is one only of imaginary occurrence, and not at all likely. We admit that. But what we want is, that you should get hold of the principle involved in the text, and you will then quickly see how it works in great variety of cases. And you get hold of the principle by observing such a case as has just been supposed. There the opportunity of injuring a parent is furnished through that parent's affection for a child; and the precept before us is violated, inasmuch as the affection, in place of serving as a shield to the parent, is taken advantage of for the doing him a mischief.

But evidently the involved principle is of very wide application. A parent may take improper advantage of a child's love, a child of a parent's. A parent may work on the affections of a child, urging the child, by the love which he bears to a father or mother, to do something wrong, something against which conscience remonstrates: this is a case in point; this is a case in which improper advantage is taken of affection, or injurious use is made of a power, which, as in the case of the bird and her young, nothing but strong affection has originated. Suppose, for instance, the child is of a serious and religious turn of mind, averse from scenes of frivolity and dissipation, and the parent wishes to take the child into such scenes, and makes the child's accompanying him a test of filial attachment; why, that parent is working the

child's injury through the child's affection; the very thing which is virtually forbidden by the precept before us.

On the other hand, a child may make an improper use of a parent's affection. Wishing for something which the parent, as he knows, disapproves and thinks wrong, some gratification, indulgence, amusement, he may work upon the parent's love; he may appeal to that love, calculating that it will not be able to resist his importunity. This is the same thing again: here a wrong is attempted towards the parent, (for a wrong is done by an inducement to do wrong,) and it is only the affection of the parent which gives the opportunity of making the attempt.

Or, to pass out of the particular case of parents and children, all the attachments which exist in life, and bind together the various members of society, may be taken advantage of for some injurious purpose, inasmuch as they will open a door of assault where otherwise the party would be quite beyond reach. The husband may use the influence given him by the affection of the wife, to induce her to comply with his wishes in things which she feels, or suspects to be wrong. The wife may make precisely the same use of the affection of her husband: she may work upon him through that affection; endeavoring to persuade him into courses from which he is repugnant, and which, had it not been for his affection, she would have had no opportunity, or at least no likelihood, of prevailing on him to adopt.

It is exactly the same amongst brothers and sisters, amongst friends and acquaintances. Any one relation may take advantage of another, and work, through that affection, the injury of the party by whom it is entertained. The parent bird, clinging to the nest, is but an example how binding the natural affections may be, and how these affections may expose to dangers which, but for them, would never be incurred. And the express direction to let go the parent bird, has only to be expanded by expanding the principle which it palpably involves, and you have a general charge as to carefulness in using the power which is derived to you from the affections of others. God endowed us with these affections, with the gracious purpose of smoothing and sweetening life, and of

furnishing an instrumentality through which Himself might be appreciated, and apprehended as our chief good. And it is a mighty power, for injuring, or for benefiting, which is conferred by these affections. You can hardly overrate the influence which, in the several relations of life, is possessed by those who are the objects of these affections, an influence which would wholly disappear, were the affections withdrawn. And God would have us shun, with the greatest possible solicitude, the making an ungenerous use of this influence, turning it to the injury of the party whose affection has created it. Parents are to be specially careful what advantage they take of filial love, and children, what advantage they take of parental. Each must shun, as they would the desecration of what is holy, and the perpetrating what is base, the working on the other, against the dictates of that other's conscience, through the medium of the affections. If the mother-bird is to be taken, at least let it not be whilst sitting on the nest. It is bad enough to bring a friend, or relation, into moral danger, to make him the captive of sin: it is worse, it is like what is elsewhere denounced in Scripture, the seething a kid in its mother's milk, to use his attachment to accelerate his ruin.

Consider then, all of you, whatever the special ties which associate you with others, that you commit a signal sin, a sin signally displeasing to God from its ungenerous, or, rather, unnatural character, when, in place of using the influence which affection confers, to the making others more devoted to religion, you employ it on the keeping them in bondage to Satan, or on bringing them back after they had broken the chain. You thought that our text had to do with a very trivial matter; you were almost ready to smile that there should be a law about birds' nests. But now observe where we have found that nest: we have found it amid the warmest charities of the heart, builded of those tender and glowing affections, which you have only to destroy, and you make earth a desert. And because there is such a nest, a nest brooded upon by bright rich wings, which even danger cannot provoke into flight, you possess a power of doing an injury; you may help to imprison an immortal soul, a soul,

which, had it not been thus detained, would have sprung upwards, and reached "the glorious liberty of the children of God." O foul, flagitious use of a power bestowed by an affection which should have secured, as it deserved, most generous treatment! O wretched parents, who, knowing the devoted attachment of children, work through that attachment to the persuading them to seek happiness in the world! O wretched children, who, calculating on the fondness of parents, entreat permission to adventure into scenes of temptation! O wretched kinsfolk, wretched friends, who, knowing themselves beloved, would urge those who love them to commence, or continue, some unrighteous practice! Again we say, if ye will scethe the kid, at least scethe it not in its mother's milk. If you must help to keep others in sin, let it not be through the power which their affection communicates. This is aggravating the guilt: this is making the injury more atrocious: this is abusing a high trust, gaining a heart that you may pierce it, a fountain that you may poison it. And this is what is so forcibly, though figuratively, denounced by the precept of our text, a precept which says nothing against seizing the parent bird, when it is not her affection for her brood which puts her in your power, but which, in that case, is most decisive against her being made prisoner: "Thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."

But our text has yet to be considered under another point of view. We have hitherto contended, that, though it be apparently an insignificant matter with which the commandment before us is concerned, principles are involved of a high order, and a wide application, so that there is no reason for surprise at finding long life promised as the reward of obedience. But we will now assume the Jews' opinion to have been correct: they were wont to say of this commandment, that it was the least amongst the commandments of Moses. Admit it to have been so; admit it to have been a very trifling thing which was enjoined, and that no satisfactory reason can be given why the Divine lawgiver should have made a specific enactment as to

such a matter as a bird's nest. There are other commandments in the law, for which it might be hard to assign any sufficient reason, save and except that it was God's pleasure to ordain them. There may have been some figurative, or symbolical, meaning; but perhaps it is as well to suppose and confess that God merely sought to put obedience to the proof, when He said, "Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together;" or, "Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself."

Yet, admitting that there are such things as commandments about trifles, admitting also that the commandment before us may be reckoned in the number, is there any cause for wonder that such a blessing as long life should be promised by way of recompense to obedience? My brethren, there is a greater trial of obedience, in a commandment of which we cannot see the reasons, than in another of which we can. In the former case, we do, or forbear, a thing, simply because God hath enjoined, or forbidden, it; in the latter, we are not moved purely by the divinity of the precept, we are actuated also by a sense of its propriety. A commandment which forbids murder, is a commandment syllabled by conscience, as well as delivered by God: he who lifts his hand to slay another, does as much violence to an irrepressible dictate from within, as to an indelible record from without. But a commandment which forbids the seizing a bird whilst sitting on the nest, is a commandment which takes its force purely from being a commandment: you might have done the thing innocently, had there been no express prohibition; and, therefore, it is only there being a prohibition which makes the doing it wrong. And surely, it may be a greater effort of obedience, to obey in some little thing, where there is no other reason but that God hath required it, than to obey in some great thing, where our own sense of what is right urges to compliance.

The tendency of our minds is to the asking a reason for every thing. It is so with doctrines. God reveals to us a truth: but we are not content to take it on the authority of revelation; we are for asking with Nicodemus, "How can

these things be?" we want to be able to explain the doctrine, and thus to find grounds for our belief, over and above the simple word of the Lord. But undoubtedly it is a higher, and must be a more acceptable, exercise of faith, when we receive a truth, because revealed, than when, because, besides being revealed, we can so arrange it that it commands itself to our reason.

It is the same with commandments. God enjoins a certain thing: but we can hardly bring ourselves to obey, simply because He has enjoined it. We have our inquiries to urge—why has He enjoined it? if it be an indifferent thing, we want to know why He should have made it the subject of a law? why not have let it alone? Why not? Because, we may venture to reply, He wishes to test the principle of obedience: He wishes to see whether his will and his word are sufficient for us. In order to this, He must legislate upon things which in themselves are indifferent, neither morally good nor morally bad: He must not confine laws to such matters as robbing a neighbor's house, on which conscience is urgent; He must extend them to such matters as taking a bird's nest, on which conscience is silent.

It is the same as with a child. He is walking in a stranger's garden, and you forbid his picking fruit: he knows that the fruit is not his, and therefore feels a reason for the prohibition. But he is walking on a common, and you forbid his picking wild flowers: he knows that no one has property in these flowers, and therefore he cannot see any reason for your prohibition. Suppose him however to obey in both cases, abstaining alike from the flowers and the fruit, in which case does he show most of the principle of obedience, most of respect for your authority and of submission to your will? Surely, when he does not touch the flowers, which he sees no reason for not touching, rather than when he does not gather the fruit, which he feels that he can have no right to gather.

It is exactly the same with God and ourselves. He may forbid things which we should have felt to be wrong, even had they not been forbidden: He may forbid things which we should not have felt wrong, nay, which would not have been wrong, unless He had forbidden them. But in which case is our obe-

dience most put to the proof? not surely as to the thing criminal even without a commandment: but as to the thing indifferent till there was a commandment. God might have made it the test of Adam's obedience that he should not kill Eve—a crime from which he would have instinctively revolted: but it was a much greater trial that he should not eat of a particular fruit; for eating it was no crime till he was told not to eat it.

And we may justly believe that, in constructing the Jewish code, God interspersed laws for which there was no apparent reason with others for which there was palpable, on purpose that He might see whether his people would obey his word, simply because it was his word; whether they would wait to know why He commanded, or be satisfied with ascertaining what He commanded. But upon this, which is manifestly the correct view of obedience, it is to inconsiderable precepts, precepts as to inconsiderable things, rather than to those which have to do with felt and undeniable duties, that we might expect to find annexed a promise of reward. The obedience which shows most of the readiness to obey, must be the obedience which God most approves: and if there be shown more of readiness to obey, where the thing done would have been indifferent, than where it would have been criminal without express command, we can have no difficulty in settling that the recompense of long life was even more to be looked for when the precept had to do with a trifle than when with the mightiest obligation. Look at the Jewish law—"Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless,"—a noble commandment, to whose fitness every heart responds. "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee, thou shalt not take the dam with the young,"—a trivial commandment, for which it is perhaps hard to assign any reason. Yet it is to the latter, the trivial, and not to the former, the noble, that the words are added, "That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Do ye wonder at this? Nay, it is not that it is a better thing in itself to let the parent bird go, than to minister justice to the stranger and the fatherless: but that it is often harder to obey in

trifles, where we looked to have been left at liberty, than in great things, as to whose fitness there has never been a doubt.

By such laws, with such sanctions, God may be said to have consecrated trifles; to have taught us that trifles may be the best tests of principles; that our religion may be better proved by the habitual giving up of our own wills in common and every-day things, than by occasional and opulent sacrifices; that it is a greater effort of piety, marking more the depth of our reverence for the word of the Almighty, to make conscience of little duties which are made duties only by that word, than to give ourselves to high tasks, to which we are summoned by the wants of the world and the voice of the Church. It may be easier, it may require less of that simple, unquestioning obedience in which God delights, to attack superstition on its throne, than to let the bird fly from its nest. Be careful, then, in religion how you make trifles of trifles. Stay not to find out why God has forbidden this or that indulgence, why He will not let you do what seems unimportant, why He prescribes rules where He might, as it appears, have safely left you to yourselves. Obey because there is a command, ay, though it be only the faintest expression of the Divinest will; Abraham was to slay Isaac, because God commanded it; you are to let go the bird, because God commands it. This is the obedience which God approves; this is the obedience which God will recompense; obedience, not without a reason, but with no reason except the Divine bidding. Oh! you have only more and more to show me that it was really unimportant, whether or not the old bird were taken with the young, that there could have been no harm in securing both at once, and you more and more explain why a promise of prosperity should be annexed to the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise take the young to thee, and let the dam go."

There is neither space nor need for many concluding observations. Our subject perhaps looked to you unpro-

missing at the first, and you fancied that little material of edification could be found in such a precept as we took for our text. Yet the precept has furnished us with important practical lessons, lessons against covetousness, against cruelty, against extravagance, against an undue use of the power given us by the affections of others, against the making little in religion of little commandments and little duties. What a wonderful book is the Bible, that its every verse should comprehend so much, single sayings being as mines of truth, into which if you patiently dig, you find stores of instruction and yet leave more than you find!

Be very careful in reading Scripture, whether the Old Testament or the New, that you pass not over parts, as though they might be unimportant. Neither be always content with the primary meaning, and the obvious application. Scripture has a hidden sense as well as an open; and to them who search for it with prayer, many a beautiful import is disclosed, which would never be suspected by the careless or cursory observer. A verse is often like the nest on which the parent bird broods: when the parent bird is let go, there are young birds within, each of which has only to be cherished and watched, and it will be "covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold."

With other lessons, then, carry away this as to the depth and comprehensiveness of Scripture. Read the Bible yourselves, and teach your children to read it, as a book that should be pondered, not hurried over; a book, so to speak, that may be better read by lines than by chapters. Ay, your children—one's home is as a nest; Job, when all was smiling around him, reports of himself, "Then I said, I shall die in my nest." It is a nest, a nest exposed to many rude invasions. The parent bird cannot always tarry with the young; but, when dismissed to wing its own flight upwards, that parent bird may leave its little ones to a better guardianship, and anticipate a day when they too shall soar to brighter regions, and find a resting-place in that tree of life which is Christ Himself.

SERMON IX.

ANGELS OUR GUARDIANS IN TRIFLES.

"They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."—PSALM xci. 12.

The preceding verse is, "For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." You will remember that, when Satan had placed our blessed Lord on the pinnacle of the Temple, it was with these two verses that he backed his temptation that He should cast Himself down, and obtain, through a useless and ostentatious miracle, the homage of the crowd assembled for worship. But the devil misquoted the verses. He left out the words "in all thy ways;" thus representing the angelic guardianship as having no limitation; whereas the promise was evidently meant to apply only whilst there was adherence to the ways of duty—those alone being the ways which could be called "thy ways," whether the passage were applied individually to the Messiah, or generally to the Church.

It has been inferred from this application of the passage by Satan, that the words were prophetic of Christ, and should be interpreted especially, if not exclusively, of a care or protection of which our Savior was the object. This inference, however, can hardly be sustained: as the devil could misquote, he could also misapply; and though it may be that, in its highest significance, this ninety-first Psalm has respect to the Messiah, there is nothing in its tone to give reason why it may not be taken to himself, by every true believer in "the Lord our righteousness."

We shall assume throughout our discourse, that the Psalm is the property, so to speak, generally of the Church: it were to rob the members of some of

their choicest comfort to prove that it belonged exclusively to the Head. If Satan gained nothing by applying the Psalm to Christ, he would have gained much if it were thence to be concluded that it applied to none else.

But we wish also, as a preliminary matter, to make one or two observations on the translation adopted in the authorized version of our text. The verb which is used conveys the idea of something very violent, "lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." But it does not seem as if the original required us to suppose any thing very violent. The Hebrew word may be interpreted merely of such contact with a stone as would make you stumble, or put you in danger of falling; whereas dashing your foot implies extreme force, as though you were the subject of some unusual disaster or accident. You see that it makes a great difference in the passage, regarded as a promise to the righteous, which of the two turns we give it: we are always in danger of tripping over a stone; we are not always in danger of dashing the foot against a stone: so that you may be said to take the promise out of every-day life, and to confine it to extraordinary emergencies, when it is made to imply such violent collision as is not likely to occur in our common walks.

When the devil, indeed, used the text in the endeavor to persuade Christ to throw Himself headlong from the pinnacle of the Temple, it was literally the dashing the foot against a stone which might have been expected to occur: accordingly the word "dash" is

employed with great propriety by our translators, in giving the account of our blessed Savior's temptation. Yet it should be observed that even the Greek word, which is thus translated "dash," by no means conveys necessarily the idea of great force or violence. It is, for example, the very same word as is employed by our Lord in the eleventh chapter of St. John's gospel, where He speaks of the security of a man who walks by day, as compared with another who walks by night. "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." We need not say that something much less than dashing the foot against a stone, will cause a man to trip or stumble as he walks in a dark night. He can hardly "dash the foot" unless he be running; and Christ, at least, speaks only of his walking.

As to the Hebrew itself, our translators have not always made it convey the idea of what is violent. The same word occurs in the third chapter of the book of Proverbs, where you read, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." We seem warranted, then, in saying that nothing more is intended in our text than that tripping or stumbling which may indeed occur through violent contact with some great impediment, which may also be occasioned by a mere pebble in our path, and when, too, we are proceeding at a leisurely pace. So that, for once, the Prayer Book version is probably the more accurate of the two: for this runs, "They shall bear thee in their hands, that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone." And with this agrees Bishop Horsley's version, "They shall bear thee up in their hands, that thou hit not thy foot against a stone." There is far less of the idea of violence in the hitting, than in the dashing the foot against a stone.

You will understand, as we proceed with our discourse, why we have been so anxious to divest the passage of the idea of violence. Not that we wish you to suppose that the promise does not include the case of dashing the foot; but we would have you aware that it includes cases where there is nothing of

this forcible collision, every case in which a man is in danger of stumbling, over however small an obstacle, and by however gentle a movement.

These are the necessary preliminaries to our discourse, the settling to whom the text may be applied, and the defining the precise import of its expressions. The text, you see, is to be applied generally to the Church, to the people of God, of every age and of every degree. The import of its expressions is that conveyed by the version in the Prayer Book, which makes them refer to an ordinary and every-day danger. These preliminaries having been adjusted, we have to endeavor to follow out the trains of thought which may be evolved from the assertion, that God gives his angels charge over the righteous, to bear them up in their hands, lest they hurt their foot against a stone.

Now the first thing which strikes one, and which we should wish to set vividly before you, is the contrast between the instrumentality employed, and the business upon which it is used. Let us look a little at what Scripture tells us of angels: we may not be able to understand much as to these glorious and powerful beings; for what is purely spiritual evades our present comprehension; but we cannot fail to learn that they are creatures far transcending ourselves in might and intelligence. They are represented as God's ministers, executing the orders of his Providence. They wait reverently in his presence, to receive the intimations of his will, and then pass, with the speed of lightning, through the universe, that they may accomplish whatsoever He hath purposed. Of vast number, for "the chariots of God," saith the Psalmist, "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," they are described in holy writ as "creatures of wonderful agility and swiftness of motion, therefore called cherubim, that is, winged creatures," and seraphim, or flames of fire, because of so strange a subtlety as to "penetrate into any kind of bodies, yea, insinuate themselves into, and affect, the very inward senses of men*." An angel, in and through a dream of the night, moved Joseph to take the young child and his

* Bishop Bull.

mother, and return out of Egypt. In like manner, an angel roused Peter from his sleep, led him past the keepers, and delivered him from the dungeon. That these angels are endowed with admirable efficacy and power, we learn from the invocation of David, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word;" and from the fearful history of the destruction of the hosts of the Assyrian, when, in a single night, and through the single agency of one of these celestial beings, "an hundred fourscore and five thousand" became "all dead corpses."

We know also of angels, that, "as immortal beings, they have no principle of corruption within themselves; as unalterable at least as the pure heaven where they dwell, they can never die or perish but by the hand of Him that first gave them being;"* for, speaking of "the children of the Resurrection," Christ hath said, "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels."

And if these be only scattered and passing intimations of the nature and office of holy angels, they are, at least, sufficient to impress us with a sense of the greatness and gloriousness of these invisible beings; a sense which can but be confirmed and increased, when we consider what fallen angels have wrought; they being, according to the representations of Scripture, the grand antagonists of the Almighty Himself, and, though doomed to a certain destruction, yet able, for century after century, to keep the universe unhinged and disordered, not indeed to frustrate the Divine plans, but to oppose such obstacles to their completion as nothing short of Divine power could surmount. What angels are that have kept their first estate, we may infer in a measure from what is done in us and around us, by angels that have apostatized from God.

And when you have duly considered and collected what is made known to us as to angels, it cannot fail but that you will have a very lofty idea of these, the principalities and powers of the invisible world, and that you will expect to find them occupied with matters that

shall seem worthy their stupendous endowments. Believing that God will always proportion the means which He employs to the end which He proposes, you would conclude that the highest of created intelligences, such as the angels are to be accounted, must be employed only on what is dazzling and magnificent, on the carrying out the desigus of the Almighty in and through the nobler combinations of cause and effect. And it might almost strike you as derogatory to the dignity of angels, that they should be represented in Scripture as "ministering spirits" to the heirs of salvation: you might almost imagine it beneath beings of endowment so far surpassing our own, that it should be a part, and, as it would seem, a main part of their office, to attend us on our passage through this troublesome world, and aid our endeavors to secure eternal life.

Yet there is nothing more clearly laid down in the Bible, than that angels are thus employed in waiting on the righteous: and when you come to think of the worth of the human soul, a worth which, if you can measure it by nothing else, you may judge in a degree by the price paid for its redemption, you will probably cease to be surprised, that not only is there "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," but that the celestial hosts marshal themselves for the guardianship of the believer, and use their vast power in promoting his good.

This, however, is removing the apparent contradiction to the lofty nature and sublime endowments of angels, by magnifying the employment, by arguing that it cannot be beneath any created intelligence to minister unto man for whom God's Son hath died. But if, over and above the general fact of angels being ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, the Bible set forth angels as doing little, inconsiderable, things on behalf of man, interfering where there seems no scope for, or no need of, their vast power, discharging offices of the most trifling description, rendering services which can hardly be observed, and between which and their ability there is the greatest apparent disproportion, then, in all probability, your surprise will return, and you will again think the occupation derogatory to the beings so employed.

Yet such is the case: the scriptures

* Bishop Bull.

representation brings down the ministration of angels to what appears trivial and insignificant, in place of confining it to some great crisis in the history of the righteous. And it is this fact which is so forcibly set before us by our text. For what contrast can be greater? We direct you to the examining whatsoever is told you in the Bible as to the nature and endowments of angels. You cannot come from such an examination but with minds fraught with a persuasion of the greatness and gloriousness of the heavenly hosts, impressed with a sense of the vastness of their capacities, the splendor of their excellence, the majesty of their strength. And then we set you to the considering what occupation can be worthy of creatures thus pre-eminently illustrious; not allowing you indeed to indulge the excursions of imagination, which might rapidly hurry you into the invisible world, and there place before you the thrones and dominions of those whom God is pleased to honor as his instruments in the government of the universe; but confining you to the single truth, that angels have offices to perform to the Church, and that every righteous man is a subject of their ministrations. But, confined to this single truth, your minds will probably be busied with vast and magnificent enterprize: you know that there is going on, amongst other orders of being, a contest for ascendancy over man; and so soon therefore as told of good angels as ministering to the heirs of salvation, you will be likely to think of the war which they wage with Satan and his hosts, and to throw a dignity round their ministration to the meanest of Christ's people, by identifying it with championship in that portentous strife, which, for wise ends, God permits to agitate his empire.

But what will you say, when Scripture forces you away from this battle between the mighty powers of the invisible world, and obliges you to contemplate angels as engaged with occupations which the most vivid fancy can scarce invest with any thing of splendor, nay, can scarce perhaps rescue from what is insignificant and degrading? Oh, it were almost startling, after hearing of the might and majesty of angels, to hear of creatures so lofty as having any ministrations to perform towards ourselves, children of corruption, and

crushed before the moth. But what shall we say when angels are introduced as bearing up the believer in their hands, not that he may be carried in safety over some vast ocean, not that he may be transported through hostile and menacing squadrons, not that, when exposed to some extraordinary danger, he may be conveyed to a place of refuge, but, as bearing him up in their arms, "lest at any time he hurt his foot against a stone?"

Now we thus bring out the great peculiarity, and, at the same time, the great beauty of the text, the contrast between the instrumentality which is employed, and the thing which is done. Angels, the topmost beings in creation, the radiant, the magnificent, the powerful—angels are represented as holding up a righteous man, lest some pebble in the path should make him trip, lest he hurt his foot against a stone. But you may be sure that we do not take pains to make you aware of this contrast merely because of its singularity or unexpectedness: we would not have drawn it out as we have done, and thus endeavored to gain for it a hold upon your minds, had we not believed that important truths were to be gathered from the assignment of what looks so trifling, the keeping a man from hurting his foot against a stone, to beings of such transcendent glory and strength as the Bible, in every part, attributes unto angels.

Let us now, therefore, see whether there is not much to be gathered, both for comfort and instruction, from a contrast which has only to be pointed out, and it must immediately be felt as every way remarkable. We would not indeed have it thought that the contrast is the solitary one of the kind, nor even perhaps that it is not exceeded in strangeness by others which may be observed in the Bible. Who that thinks of the greatness and stupendousness of God, and then asks himself what can be a fitting employment for God, does not find his mind turning, almost naturally, to stars and systems, whose stately movements have to be ordered? or to empires, whose rise and fall seem important enough for the attention of the universal Governor? or, if to individuals of our race, yet to the more eminent and distinguished, on whom commonwealths depend, and to these only at some spe-

cial times, when nothing less than Divine power can suffice for the extricating them from difficulty, or the delivering them from danger?

But how different are the representations of Scripture. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." God the doer, the wiping away tears the thing done—what a contrast! what apparent disproportion! Then the prayer of David, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle"—what a picture does it give of God! there is something which looks God-like in Isaiah's delineation, He "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand;" but putting our tears into his bottle, if we had not found it in the Bible, we might not have dared to imagine it. Thus again, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness,"—what an image of Deity! what an occupation for Deity! it is hardly possible, with the mind fresh from the contemplation of the unwearied actings of God amid the awful grandeurs of creation, to realize the picture, yea, even to feel as if there were nothing unbecoming or irreverent in the picture, of God's making the bed of one of his sick servants.

The contrast, then, in our text between an agency so mighty as that of angels, and an act so inconsiderable as that of keeping a man from hurting his foot against a stone, is not the alone specimen of the kind, but rather one of a number which may all be presumed to enforce the same truths. And what we would have you observe of such a contrast, is, that it is the very minuteness, the seeming insignificance, of the thing done, which gives its chief worth to the promise in our text. For the doctrine of a special Providence is valuable in proportion as we extend it to what the world counts trifles, to things of every-day occurrence. If you confine, as many do, the doctrine of God's providence to great events, supposing that it is only on some extraordinary emergence, in some unusual danger or difficulty, that God may be thought to give attention to an individual or a family, then truly there is but little comfort in the doctrine; for life, with most men, is but a round of petty things; each day is the repetition of the preceding, the same simple duties, the same simple trials; and as to a great crisis, which may warrant a belief that Deity, too highly ex-

alted, or too busily occupied, to concern Himself with ordinary things, is interposing and observing, really most of us might pass year after year, proceeding from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age, without being able to fix an occasion which might justify our supposing that the crisis had been reached.

But the scriptural doctrine of Divine providence is altogether different from what such a limitation would give. The scriptural doctrine makes nothing too little for the care, as nothing too great for the power, of God. The scriptural doctrine sets God before us as mindful of the fall of a sparrow, as well as of the decay of an empire; as numbering the hairs of our heads, as well as the years of our lives. Whether it be through his own immediate agency, or whether He employ the instrumentality of his creatures, God is represented in the Bible as giving the most accurate heed, the most patient and observant attention, to the every-day wants of the meanest amongst us; so that nothing happens, though of the most trivial description, to the most insignificant of our race, save in and through the Divine appointment or permission; and there is not the poor man, whom the rising sun wakens to the going forth to toil for his daily bread, who may not as distinctly assure himself of his carrying with him to his wearisome task the ever-watchful guardianship of the Almighty Maker of the heavens and the earth, as though he were the leader of armies, or the ruler of nations.

Blessed be God for a truth such as this. It should go home to every heart. It cannot fail to go home, wheresoever a sense exists of the uncertainty of life, of the exposure to accident, of the wheel within wheel in the most common-place occurrences, of that utter powerlessness of looking into the future, and providing for its contingencies, which attaches alike to the wisest of us and to the weakest. We are not only permitted, we are commanded, to cast all our care upon God, and that, too, on the very principle of his caring for us;—all our care—oh, that we might learn to keep no care to ourselves, to commit our least anxieties to God, to lean upon his assistance in the performance of our least duties, upon his strength in the endur-

ance of our least trials, upon his comforts for the soothing of our least sorrows. If we would not exclude God from any thing little, we should find Him with us in everything great. If we thought nothing beneath God, we should find nothing above Him. And the beauty, as we have said, of such passages as our text, lies, not in their enlisting on man's side the most magnificent instrumentality, but in their enlisting it for some apparently trivial and inconsiderable purpose. For to tell me of angels, the ministers whom God is pleased to employ for the carrying on his providential operations, as appointed to the attending my path in certain great emergencies or perplexities, there would comparatively be little or nothing of comfort in this; what I want is an every-day providence. I want a guardianship which will go with me to my every-day duties, which will be around me in my every-day trials, which shall attend me in the household, in the street, in my business, in my prayers, in my recreations; which I may be aware of as watchful where there is no apparent peril, and which I may be assured of as sufficient where there is the worst.

And such a guardianship is revealed to me, when the hosts of heaven are affirmed to be employed on the protecting me against the most trifling accident. Oh! it might not do much towards cheering and elevating the poor and unknown of the flock, or towards the daily, hourly upholding of such as have higher places to fill, to be told of angels as encamping, as they encamped about Elisha, crowding the mountain with chariots of fire and horses of fire, when the king of Syria sent a great host to take the man of God. It cannot be often, if ever, that there is anything parallel to this peril of the prophet. But it just brings the celestial armies, in all their powerfulness, into the scenes of ordinary life—in other words, it gives to the doctrine of a Divine providence all that extensiveness, that individuality, that applicability to the most inconsiderable events, as well as that adequacy to the most important, which we require, if the doctrine is to be of worth and of efficacy, at all times, to all ranks, and in all cases—to be told that God has commissioned angels, the mightiest of his creatures, to bear us

up in their hands, not lest we fall over a precipice, come beneath an avalanche, sink in a torrent, but lest at any time we hurt our foot against a stone.

We are far, however, from being content with this view of the passage. There is indeed something that is exquisitely soothing and encouraging in the thought that angels, as ministering spirits, are so mindful of us that they look to the very pebbles which might cause us to trip;—how can we be other than safe if we do but trust in the Lord, when there is such care for our safety that the highest of created beings sedulously remove the least impediments, or watch that we surmount them? But this proceeds on the supposition that the hurting the foot against a stone is a trivial thing. We have spoken of the contrast in the text as though it were matter of surprise, that such an instrumentality as that of angels should be employed to so insignificant an end as that of preventing the hurting the foot against a stone. But is it an insignificant end? Is there, after all, any want of keeping between the agency and the act, so that there is even the appearance of angels being unworthily employed, employed on what is beneath them, when engaged in bearing us up, lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone?

Nay, the hurting the foot against a stone has often laid the foundation of fatal bodily disease: the injury which seemed too trifling to be worth notice has produced extreme sickness, and ended in death. Is it different in spiritual respects, in regard of the soul, to which the promise in our text must be specially applied? Not a jot. Or, if there be a difference, it is only that the peril to the soul from a slight injury is far greater than that to the body: the worst spiritual diseases might commonly be traced to inconsiderable beginnings. This, my brethren, is a fact worthy your closest attention: we want you now to argue, from angels bearing us in their hands, lest we hurt the foot against a stone, that the hurting the foot against a stone is no such trifle as it seems; and we are sure that, if you consider awhile, you will admit that the importance of the thing done every way warrants that angels should be employed on the doing it.

Let us fix your attention on a case of

lamentable frequency, that which came under the survey of St. Paul, when he had to say to members of the Galatian Church, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" There is many a man who evinces, for a time, a stedfast attention to religion, walking with all care in the path of God's commandments, using appointed means of grace, and avoiding occasions of sin, but who, after a while, in the expressive language of Scripture, leaves his first love, declines from spirituality, and is dead, though he may yet have a name to live. But how does it commonly happen that such a man falls away from the struggle for salvation, and mingles with the multitude that walk the broad road? Is it ordinarily through some one powerful and undisguised assault that he is turned from the faith, or over one huge obstacle that he falls to rise not again? Not so. It is almost invariably through little things that such a man destroys his soul. He fails to take notice of little things, and they accumulate into great. He allows himself in little things, and they accumulate into great. He allows himself in little things, and thus forms a strong habit. He concedes in little things, and thus gradually gives up much; he relaxes in little things, and thus in time loosens every bond. Because it is a little thing, he counts it of little moment; utterly forgetting that millions are made up of units, that immensity is constituted of atoms. Because it is only a stone, a pebble, against which his foot strikes, he makes light of the hindrance; not caring that he is contracting a habit of stumbling, or not observing, that, whenever he trips, there must be some diminution in the speed with which he runs the way of God's commandments, and that, however slowly, these diminutions are certainly bringing him to a stand.

The astronomer tells us, that because they move in a resisting medium, which, perhaps, in a million of years, destroys the millionth part of their velocity, the heavenly bodies will at length cease from their mighty march. May not, then, the theologian assure us, that little roughnesses in the way, each retarding us, though in an imperceptible degree, will eventually destroy the onward movement, however vigorous and direct it may at one time have seemed? Would

to God that we could persuade you of the peril of little offences. We are not half as much afraid of your hurting the head against a rock, as of your hurting the foot against a stone. There is a sort of continued attrition, resulting from our necessary intercourse with the world, which of itself deadens the movements of the soul; there is moreover a continued temptation to yield in little points, under the notion of conciliating; to indulge in little things, to forego little strictnesses, to omit little duties; and all with the idea that what looks so slight cannot be of real moment. And by these littles, thousands, tens of thousands, perish. If they do not come actually and openly to a stand, they stumble and stumble on, getting more and more careless, nearer and nearer to indifference, lowering the Christian standards, suffering religion to be peeled away by inches, persuading themselves that they can spare without injury such inconsiderable bits, and not perceiving, that in stripping the bark, they stop the sap.

On the other hand, men become eminent in piety by giving heed to little things; grateful for the smallest good, watchful over the smallest error, fearful of the smallest sin, careful of the smallest truth. They become great, through counting nothing little but themselves; great in knowledge, through studying the least sentence, and treasuring the least fragment; great in faith, through noting God's hand in little incidents, and going to Him in little sorrows; great in holiness, through avoiding little faults, and being exact in little duties. They thought it no trifle to strike the foot against a stone, and therefore is their step so firm, and their port so erect, however rugged and difficult the path. And are not then angels worthily employed, when employed in bearing up the righteous, "lest at any time they hurt their foot against a stone?" If they are "ministering spirits," watchful of whatsoever may endanger our salvation, think not that it must be to things which seem to us great, that they give special heed; they know far better than ourselves, though even we may know it well if we will, that it is the little which, neglected, makes apostates; which, observed, makes apostles.

Then turn henceforward the text to

good account, as a warning against committing small sins, a motive to diligence in small duties. Learn, from what angels are intent to do for you, what you should be earnest in endeavoring to do for yourselves. Those glorious, though invisible, beings bestow not their vigilance and carefulness on what is unworthily so lofty an instrumentality. They would not give such earnest heed to pebbles in the way, if it were not that pebbles are what men stumble over till precipitated into perdition, or what they mount upon till elevated into excellence. And if it might make you feel as though it were only at some great crisis, under some extraordinary temptation, or confronted by more than common enemies, that you had need for anxiety, effort, and prayer, to be told of angels as attending you to ward off the thunderbolt, or chain the tempest, oh, let it teach you how easy a thing it is to lose the soul, from what insignificant beginnings may fatal disease rise, with what unwearied earnestness you should avoid disobeying God in trifles, conforming to the world in trifles, relaxing in duty in trifles, to be told that angels, creatures of surpassing splendor and might, are commissioned to bear us up in their hands, not lest at any time we rush into the lion's den, or fall from the mountain top, but "lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone."

There is one other remark which ought to be made on our text, though it may perhaps be involved in those which have already been advanced. We have endeavored to show you, from the vast importance in religion of giving heed to little things, that is far enough from being derogatory to the dignity of angels, that they should be employed on keeping the righteous from hurting the foot against a stone. You cease to wonder that such instrumentality should be used, if it be a thing of such moment towards which it is directed. But you ought further to observe, that it must be a thing, not only of importance, but of difficulty; otherwise, it would hardly be represented as engaging, or occupying, the ministration of angels. It can be no easy thing, this keeping the foot from being hurt against a stone, seeing that the highest of created beings are commissioned to effect it. Neither is it. The difficulty in religion is the taking

up the cross "daily," rather than the taking it up on some set occasion, and under extraordinary circumstances.—The serving God in little things, the carrying religious principle into all the details of life, the discipline of our tempers, the regulation of our speech, the domestic Christianity, the momentary sacrifices, the secret and unobserved self-denials; who, that knows any thing of the difficulties of piety, does not know that there is greater danger of his failing in these than in trials of apparently far higher cost, and harder endurance; if on no other account, yet because the very absence of what looks important, or arduous, is likely to throw him off his guard, make him careless or confident, and thereby almost insure defect or defeat?

It is not, comparatively, hard to put the armor on when the trumpet sounds; but it is, to keep the armor on when there is no alarm of battle. I am not likely to forget my need of Divine grace, and to fail to seek it by diligent prayer, when I am summoned to some unusual duty, or menaced with some unusual danger; but it is only too probable that I may lapse into formality, or forget my own insufficiency, when there is simply what is of every-day occurrence to be either done or endured. He who would not think of climbing a mountain in his own strength, may think of passing over a stone. If he feel that he must be borne up by angels for the one, he may fancy that he needs no such help for the other. And, in religion, things are difficult, not so much from what they are in themselves, as from the likelihood of their being attempted in a self-sufficient temper. That, after all, is the most arduous duty, which involves the most temptation to our undertaking it without prayer. At least, the duty in which there is the greatest probability of failure, is that in which there is the greatest probability of our making sure of success. The chief danger is surely not that, which, being palpable and menacing, puts us on our guard, and makes us array our defence; but rather that, which, being subtle and unobtrusive, is likely to be neglected, or met without due preparation.

Understand, therefore, and remember that there is great difficulty in little things. Not without reason are angels

represented as ministering to us in little things: supernatural assistance is needful for little things; I do not say, more so than for great; but the want of it is less likely to be felt; and in proportion as the want is less felt, the supply is less likely to be sought; and the stone will be a worse stumbling-block to the man who is not committing his way unto the Lord, than the rock to another whose every step is with prayer. Remember that daily duties and dangers, the little unevennesses which may ruffle a temper, the petty anxieties of common life,

the exercises of Christian principles in trifles, these are what may be likened to pebbles in the path. But make not light of them because they are as pebbles. Ask daily grace as you ask daily bread. Attempt not the least thing in your own strength. And let it assure you of the difficulty of what is little, and of your consequent need, in what is little, of the might of the Lord, that angels, the highest created agencies, have the office assigned them of bearing up the righteous, "lest at any time they hurt their foot against a stone."

SERMON X.

THE APPEARANCE OF FAILURE.

* Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.—HEBREWS iv. 1.

It is a great principle under the Christian dispensation, that "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." We are "members one of another," so associated by intimate and indissoluble ties, that we ought never to consider our actions as having a bearing only on ourselves; we should rather regard them as likely to affect numbers, and sure to affect some, of our fellow men, to affect them in their eternal interests, and not only in their temporal.

It would seem to be upon this principle that St. Paul exhorts Timothy not to be "partaker of other men's sins." The setting a bad example, to say nothing of the giving bad advice, makes us "partakers of other men's sins:" other men may take lessons, or be encouraged in sinning, from observing what we do; and thus may we virtually sin in other persons, as well as in our own; yea, sin after death as well as through

life, leaving successors behind us whose sins may, in great measure, and with thorough justice, be charged upon us no less than on themselves.

It is upon the same principle that we are required in Scripture to consider what may be expedient, as well as what may be lawful. There may be many things which our Christian liberty permits us to do as individuals, but from which Christian expediency requires us to abstain, as members of a Christian society. Thus St. Paul declares that, if meat made his brother to offend, he would eat no meat whilst the world stood, lest he should make his brother to offend. The apostle well understood the liberty procured for him by Christ: he says distinctly, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." But, whilst certified that "all things were lawful for him," he was certified also

that "all things were not expedient:" he felt himself bound to consult for the good of those weaker brethren, who, not equally enlightened with himself, might have been staggered by his doing things which they were not themselves prepared to do; and whilst, had he been isolated and alone, he could have partaken, with a good conscience, indifferently of all kinds of food, he deemed it right, out of regard to the scruples of others, to put restraints upon his liberty, and to deny himself rather than place a stumbling-block in the way of the weak.

We have again the same principle, the principle that membership should influence actions, involved in a precept of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." There is not necessarily evil, wheresoever there is the "appearance of evil;" just as it were wrong to conclude that all which looks good is good. Yet the apostle requires us to abstain from the "appearance of evil," as well as from evil itself. Is this for our own sake? is it not also, if not altogether, for the sake of others? No doubt our own interest is concerned in the abstaining from the "appearance of evil," forasmuch as there is always great danger in approaching the limits of what is lawful: they who go as near sinning as they dare, often go much nearer than they suppose: the boundary between a virtue and its opposite vice is often shaded off so gradually, that the nicest discrimination would be puzzled to ascertain where the one terminates and the other begins; so that, if we venture into the misty region, in place of remaining where there is no obscurity or debate, no wonder if we transgress some commandment which, all the while, we may believe that we keep. Wherever there is certainly the "appearance of evil," and it is doubtful whether there is not also evil itself, we seem bound by the laws of Christian prudence, and out of due regard to our own spiritual safety, to act on the doubt, and abstain from the action. The soul ought never to be periled on a chance; and he who loves God in sincerity, will always prefer the denying himself where he might perhaps have lawfully indulged, to the indulging himself where he ought perhaps to have denied.

Hence there is wide scope for the precept of abstaining from "all appearance of evil," supposing it to have respect to ourselves alone, and our individual interests. Yet, nevertheless, the chief bearing of the injunction is probably on the interests of those with whom we are associated. Even if we are quite satisfied that there is only the "appearance of evil," and no evil itself, the precept, you see, requires our abstinence: when we could do the thing with a good conscience, without the least misgiving as to its being thoroughly lawful, notwithstanding any aspect to the contrary, we are still warned back from the action; and this must be because the action would be likely to give offence to others, who are not so clear-sighted as ourselves, might be unable to distinguish between the "appearance of evil" and evil itself. What has only the appearance to me, may have more than the appearance to another; and I am as much bound to take care that I wound not the conscience of one weaker than myself, as that I do no violence to the dictates of mine own.

There is something of a fine sound in advice which is often given, "Do what you know to be right, and care not what others may think;" but, after all, it is not universally, nor perhaps even generally, good and Christian advice. A Christian should consider the opinion of his fellow Christians: a Christian should have regard to the scruples of his fellow Christians: indeed he should do, without hesitation, whatsoever he feels to be right, if it be what God's law positively requires; all consequences are to be dared, rather than that God be disobeyed; but it ought not to be every thing to him that his own conscience approves, and nothing that the consciences of others may be grieved.

And thus does it follow, from various passages of Scripture, that Christians are so bound up the one with the other, and their interests so interwoven, that each should consider himself as acting for a multitude, and the individual always calculate with regard to the Church. Ask then yourselves, whether, as Christians, you are striving to act on the maxim of the apostle, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Be not engrossed with securing your

own salvation; see to it that ye be not, at the same time, endangering the salvation of others. For be ye well assured that true piety is an enlarged and enlarging thing: it holds no terms with selfishness, but always deals with it as with an antagonist, who must destroy or be destroyed. If it be one great test of the genuineness of religion, Do I have respect to the good of my soul in the various plans and arrangements of life? depend upon it that it is not the less an accurate criterion by which to try the spiritual state, Do I think of what will do good to the souls of others? do I aim at so living that others may be influenced to the obeying the Gospel?

Now you will presently see why we have introduced our discourse with these remarks on Christians as being members one of another, and therefore bound to have respect, in all their actions, to the possible effects on their fellow Christians as well as on themselves. In the chapter preceding that which is opened by our text, St. Paul had been speaking of those Israelites, who though delivered by Moses from Egypt, never reached the promised land, but perished, through unbelief, in the wilderness. From this the apostle took occasion to warn Christians, that they might have made some progress towards Heaven, and still be in danger of missing its possession. They were to regard the case of the Israelites as but too possible an illustration of what might be their own: delivered from bondage, brought into the right way, and privileged with heavenly guidance, they might yet, through yielding to unbelief, come short of that glorious land whereof the Gospel had conveyed to them the promise.

And if this had been the whole tenor of our text, it would have afforded but little place for commentary, though much for private and personal meditation. Had the apostle exhorted Christians to fear lest any of them should come short of the promised rest, the exhortation, however valuable and important, would hardly have required the being illustrated or explained; the preacher's only business would have been the impressing it in its simplicity and power on his hearers, and the endeavoring to prevail on them to examine the grounds on which they might be hoping for admission into heaven. But you will observe

that St. Paul does not speak of "coming short," but of "seeming to come short," "lest any of you should seem to come short of it." We lay the emphasis on the word "seem," thinking that the stress of the passage is here; just as, in the precept on which we before spoke, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," the warning is against that which "seems" to be evil; it necessarily includes whatsoever both is, and appears to be, evil, but it includes also much which only appears to be, without actually being.

In like manner, the seeming to come short, and the actually coming short, are not necessarily the same; a man may have the appearance of failure, and nevertheless be successful. He "seems to come short" of the promised rest, who, in the judgment of his fellow-men, is deficient in those outward evidences by which they are wont to try the genuineness of religion. But surely, all the while, he may not actually "come short:" human judgment is fallible, and can in no case be guided by inspecting the heart, which alone can furnish grounds for certain decision; and, doubtless, many may be found in heaven at last, of whose entrance thither survivors could entertain nothing more than a charitable hope. And is it not enough, if we do not "come short?" why should we further concern ourselves as to the not "seeming to come short?" We might answer, as we did in regard of the "appearance of evil," that it is a dangerous thing to approach danger. He who "seems to come short" must almost necessarily be in some peril of failure; and where heaven is at stake, no wise man, if he could help it, would run the least risk. Besides, it can hardly be that he, who seems to others to come short, should possess decisive and scriptural evidences of his acceptance with God. He may indeed know himself better than others know him; neither is he at all bound to accept their judgment as determining his state; but still, as others decide from external evidence, and such evidence is of more weight than any internal persuasion, it is difficult to see how he, who seems to others to come short, as not letting his light shine brightly before men, can have a well-founded hope that he is not coming short, but is daily pressing "towards

the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ." And if it be a necessary result of our seeming to others to come short, that we have but feeble and darkened evidences of our being made meet for the kingdom, indeed there is abundant cause for the fear expressed in the text: he who can be content to remain in doubt when he might have strong hope, almost shows, by not longing and striving for clearer proof, that what he already has is deceitful and vain.

But whilst there may thus be many reasons given why we should fear the seeming to come short, even were our personal well-being alone to be considered, the full force of the text, as with that which enjoins abstinence from the appearance of evil, is only to be brought out through reference to our being members the one of the other. We shall, therefore, take the passage under this point of view through the remainder of our discourse. In other words, we will examine what there is, in an appearance of failure, to do injury to the cause of Christianity, and therefore to justify the apostle in so emphatically calling upon you to fear, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Now as there are undoubtedly many ways in which we may actually come short, so must there be many in which we may apparently come short: who can tell up the methods in which the soul may be lost? neither can any one enumerate those in which it may seem to be lost. But we may fix on certain of the more prominent appearances of failure, or, rather, on certain of the more prominent reasons which may give others the impression that a Christian comes short; and when these shall have been fairly discussed and followed out, the general subject under review will have been so far made clear, that every one may apprehend any particular case.

And it must, we think, commend itself to you in the first place, that none will more "seem to come short," than those whose practice is in any way inconsistent with their profession, so that lookers-on can decide that their conduct is not strictly accordant with the principles by which they declare themselves actuated. This is the first great case on which we would fasten. We are far

from presuming to determine the amount of inconsistency which might be taken in proof of an actual coming short of the promised inheritance; for we remember, that, whilst perfection is that at which the Christian is to aim, it is that which, in this life, he may not hope to reach; and compassed as he is, and must be, with infirmity, he will often be betrayed into sin, notwithstanding that he hates it, and that his heart, on the whole, is right with his God.

But we are not now concerned with the actual, but only with the apparent coming short; and it must be clear that every inconsistency helps to the making us "seem to come short," however, through the being repented of and repaired through the grace of God, it may leave undamaged our spiritual estate. He who professes to "walk in the light as God is in the light," may occasionally wander into dark paths, and yet be mercifully restored; but it can hardly fail but that the impression produced on observers, especially on men of the world, will be one as to the weakness of his principles, or a want of power in that religion which professes itself adequate to the renewing the world. And who will pretend to compute the amount of damage done to the cause of vital Christianity by the inconsistencies of those who profess themselves subjected to its laws, and animated by its hopes? The heathen has adhered to his idols, because he can point to many who would invite him to a purer worship, but exhibit not a purer morality. The nominal Christian has been strengthened in his dislike and ridicule of piety of the heart, through observing that those supposed to possess it, could be fretful, malicious, covetous, or envious; to say nothing of more flagrant departures from conformity to the revealed will of God. It was, as you will remember, on such account as this, that, even when God extended forgiveness to David, who had grievously sinned, He inflicted also severe punishment,—“because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” David did not actually “come short” of the promised inheritance, through sinning so heinously against the Lord; but David “seemed to come short;” he would have come short, had not genuine

repentance followed on grievous transgression; but there was, at least, all the appearance of thorough apostasy: and this appearance gave such occasion of blasphemy, that, in vindication of the righteousness of his government, God had to inflict judgment at the same time that He granted pardon.

But if flagrant acts, like those of David, were thus fruitful sources of blasphemy to the enemies of the Lord, no doubt acts of lesser criminality, the manifestations of undisciplined tempers, the utterances of unguarded speech, the inordinate indulgences of appetite, the adherences of the affections to perishable things, all work their measure of effect upon men who are on the watch for some charge against the Gospel, or for some excuse for resisting its claims; and also upon others who may be halting "between two opinions," at a loss whether to decide for God, or for the world. It is the place of a Christian to be as a city set on a hill; but "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid;" and he may be quite sure, from the very position into which a religious profession brings him, that his every departure from the high standards of the Gospel, his every failure in the rigid subjection of himself to the law of God, as expanded and expounded by Christ, will serve in some way to do injury to others as well as to himself, producing an impression unfavorable to the worth and power of piety, whether in such as are glad to bring godliness into contempt, or in others who seek to be assured that Christianity can make good its professions and promises.

How vast, then, the importance of not even "seeming to come short!" Who will think it enough if he do not actually come short, and pass by the appearance as a thing of no moment? What, when he "seems to come short," in whose life are inconsistencies, contradictions, failures in obedience, and the like, which, if truly repented of, will not indeed prevent the final entrance into Heaven, but which are almost sure to be impediments in the way of many others, if not instrumental to their utter exclusion? Is this nothing? is this little? nothing, to bring reproach on the Gospel? little, to excite prejudice which may keep men from Christ? Oh, if you do but think that errors and

deviations, of which you are, through Divine grace, enabled yourselves to escape the everlasting penalties, may confirm opponents in their oppositions, and wanderers in their wanderings; and that thus, what is in you but the appearance of missing heaven, may help to the actually bringing others to eternal perdition; it cannot be that henceforward you will care only for what is, and nothing for what may seem to be, your state; you will enter fully and practically into the fear expressed by the Apostle, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

But there is another, if a less obvious mode of "seeming to come short." It should be observed, that, though the Apostle, when speaking of rest, must be considered as referring mainly to that rest which is future, there is a degree, or kind, of present rest which is attainable by the Christian, and which is both the type and foretaste of that which is to come. Thus St. Paul, in a verse which follows almost immediately on our text, says of Christians, "We which have believed do enter into rest;" and afterwards, "He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his," evidently making the entering into rest, a present thing, as well as a future. And undoubtedly, if he lived up to his privileges, there is a present rest which the Christian might enjoy. Our blessed Savior bequeathed peace, his own peace, as a legacy to his Church; and what Christ entailed on us, may surely be enjoyed by us. Without dwelling on what is popularly called the doctrine of personal election, and which, even if we were to allow it to be a thoroughly Scriptural doctrine, can give well-founded comfort to no one, except so far as he is using "all diligence to make his calling and election sure," we may certainly say that he who is meekly endeavoring to obey God's will, and humbly relying on the merit and mediation of Christ, ought to be so hopeful of final salvation as to present a happy deportment, in the midst even of many trials, and in spite even of many enemies. That fears will sometimes harass, and doubts cloud his mind, this is perhaps unavoidable; many are constitutionally timid and mistrustful: and it is not as

much observed as it ought to be, that conversion does not profess to alter the nervous system, and that this system will produce symptoms which are often anxiously submitted to the spiritual adviser, when they really come more properly within the province of the medical.

But when every just allowance has been made for constitution and circumstances, it may safely be affirmed that the general deportment of the believer should be that of serenity and hopefulness, the deportment of one who has already entered into rest, though not that perfect rest which yet "remaineth for the people of God." The religion of the Bible is a cheerful, happy-making religion: the very word "Gospel" signifies "glad tidings;" and he who has received good news into his heart, may justly be expected to exhibit in his demeanor, if not much of the rapture of joy, yet something of the quietness of peace. But it is in this that righteous persons are often grievously deficient; nay, they perhaps even think that it becomes them to go always mourning, and that, sinful as they are, it were worse than presumption in them ever to be cheerful. Hence, in place of struggling with doubts, and endeavoring to extinguish or eject them, they may be said actually to encourage them, as if they befitted their state, and either betokened, or cherished, humility. A great mistake this. There is commonly more of pride than of humility in doubts; he who is always doubting is generally searching in himself for some ground or reason of assurance; whereas, true, genuine humility, looks wholly out of self, not as forgetting the corruption which is there, but as fastening on the sufficiency which is in Christ.

But, without dissecting more narrowly the character of the always doubting Christian, we cannot hesitate to say of him, that he is one of those who "seem to come short." If a present, as well as a future rest, be promised to the righteous—and what else can be denoted by such words as these, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee?"—certainly he, at least, "seems to come short" of that rest, who is continually the prey of fear and disquietude, who has never any thing to express but apprehensions as to his deceiving himself, or who wears always

the appearance of one ill at ease in regard of his spiritual interests. And without denying that there may be thorough safety where there is all this seeming insecurity, we are bound to declare, that, so far as others are concerned, the Christian, who thus "seems to come short," is the cause of great injury. He presents religion under a false aspect: like one of the spies of old, he brings the promised land into disrepute, and discourages those whose business it is to go up and possess it. The world is disposed enough to give a morose and gloomy character to godliness, representing it as the opponent of all cheerfulness, and as requiring that we surrender whatsoever can minister to happiness. We tell the world, in reply, that it does thus but libel our faith; that there is nothing deserving the name of happiness, save with those who have devoted themselves to the service of Christ; and we challenge its attractions and enticements to put themselves, if they can, even into a present competition with that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

But what are we to say to the world, when its appeal lies from assertions to facts? when it can point out religious persons as always melancholy and desponding? Why quote to us, the world will urge, the exquisitely beautiful words, "Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," when so many, who are looking only to Jesus for rest, must, at least, be admitted to "seem to come short of it?" What indeed is to be said to the world? God forbid that we should bear hardly on those who have already much to bear, in the burden of their own doubts, misgivings, and fears. But I question whether Christians sufficiently consider the injury which they may do to the cause of the Savior, by not striving to "rejoice in the Lord," and to display in their deportment the happy-making power of vital religion. I question whether they sufficiently feel the duty of wrestling with those doubts which give them all the air of dispirited and disconsolate men—the duty, not merely, and not even chiefly, because doubts rob them of comforts which God graciously intended to be theirs; but because doubts, by thus throwing over them an aspect of sadness and gloom,

misrepresent piety, either causing or strengthening the impression that God is a hard task-master, and that, in keeping of his commandments, there is little or nothing of present reward.

It could hardly fail to be a new and strong motive with religious persons to the cultivating cheerfulness of deportment, and therefore to the withstanding those disheartening fears, which they perhaps think even wholesome, as keeping them humble—just as though a firm confidence of acceptance through the cross of the Redeemer were not itself the great foe of pride—if they carefully remembered that others will judge religion by its apparent effects, and that, if they see it produce only sadness, they will be likely to shun it as opposed to all joy. A gloomy Christian may not be always always able to help his gloom; but he should lament it, and strive with it: for what will a generous leader say of a soldier, who commissioned to enlist others under the same banner with himself, makes his appearance in the world as a terrified and half-famished prisoner? Oh no! it is not enough that ye do not come short. It is not enough that, through darkness and doubt, ye struggle at last into the kingdom of heaven. Ye should aim at something higher than this. Ye should aim at adorning the doctrine of the Savior, setting it off to the best advantage, recommending it to a world which is eager in the pursuit after happiness, as that which makes good the saying, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And, therefore, in place of always harboring and indulging other fears, fears which, as originating in a sense of unworthiness, should be met with the truth that it was for the unworthy Jesus died, let the fear expressed in our text be henceforwards constant in operation, even the fear "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

But now, having thus illustrated the text from inconsistency of conduct, and from the harboring of doubts, either of which will cause a Christian to "seem to come short," let us take one other case, one which is not perhaps indeed as much under our own power, but one against which we may be always endeavoring to provide. The great busi-

ness of life, as we all confess, is preparation for death. And a Christian's hope, a Christian's desire, should be that he may be enabled to meet death triumphantly, putting his foot on the neck of the last enemy, and proving that Christ hath despoiled him of his sting. It should not content him that he may pass in safety through the dark valley, though with little of that firm sense of victory which discovers itself in the exulting tone, or the burning vision. This indeed is much—oh! that we might believe that none, now present, would have less than this. But, in having only this, a Christian may "seem to come short." And there is often a mighty discouragement from the death-beds of the righteous, when, as the darkness thickens, and the strength declines, there is apparently but little consolation from the prospect of eternity. Even as, on the other hand, when a righteous man is enabled to meet death exultingly, as though he had but to step into the ear of fire, and be wafted almost visibly to the heavenly city, there is diffused over a neighborhood a sort of animating influence; the tidings of the victory spread rapidly from house to house: the boldness of infidelity quails before them; meek piety takes new courage, and attempts new toils.

And it ought not, therefore, to satisfy us that we may so die as not to come short of heaven: we ought to labor that we may so die as not even to "seem to come short of it." It is doubly dying, if, in dying, we work an injury to our brethren; it is scarcely dying, if we strengthen them for their departure out of life. This is, in its measure, the doing what was done by the Redeemer Himself, who, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death:" the believer, as he enters the grave, deals a blow at the tyrant, which renders him less terrible to those who have yet to meet him in the final encounter. And by continued preparation for death, by accustoming ourselves to the anticipation of death, by the striving always so to live that death may not take us by surprise, but that, having the loins girt, the lamps trimmed, and the lights burning, we may be as men expecting the bridegroom, we may indeed hope to be so ready, through God's help, for the act of departure, that our passage through

the valley shall be rather with the tread of the conqueror, than with the painful step of the timid pilgrim.

It is true that we have not power over the circumstances of our death; that we cannot insure ourselves a triumphant death; and that God, for wise ends, may often be pleased, in removing his people from earth, to withhold from them those glimpses of things within the veil, which, whenever vouchsafed, seem to light up a sick room, as though angels, with their bright wings, were visibly present. But perhaps it may be generally true, that they who have made it their aim that they might not "seem to come short" during life, are not permitted to "seem to come short" in death. He who lives most consistently is perhaps commonly enabled to die most triumphantly. He who is most earnest in scattering those doubts which are dishonoring to the Savior, harassing to himself, and injurious to the Church, will find the termination of his earthly path haunted with fewest of those dark and spectral things, which agitate a believer, even though he feel that his Redeemer is near.

See, then, a new motive to the striving so to live that you may not "seem to come short," whether of the practice or the privilege of true followers of Christ. It is thus that you may have reason to hope that you shall not "seem to come short" when you die. And again we say, think not little of this. I have before me two pictures; come and gaze, and then think it little if you can. I see a Christian stretched on his death-bed, patient indeed, and hearkening eagerly to the words of those who stand round, and who are speaking to him of that "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." But there is

little of hopefulness in his look, and as little in his language. "O my friends"—these are his struggling utterances—"it is an awful thing to die. I trust that the Savior in whom I have believed will not desert me in this sad extremity; but there is much of darkness on my mind, now that I most need the cheering light." The weeping relatives are not dismayed by these words; for they have reason to be assured of the piety of the dying man; but they feel more and more the tremendousness of death, and, in their broken whisperings one to another, they say, Alas for ourselves, when even this our brother "seems to come short."

But I see another Christian meeting death. His look is that of one who already has his hand on an incorruptible crown. His voice, weakened indeed by approaching dissolution, gives forth the tones of confidence and exultation. "Sorrow not for me, my beloved ones. With Stephen, I see Jesus at the right hand of God. With Job, 'I know that my Redeemeth liveth.' I am safe in the good Shepherd's keeping; yet another struggle, and I am with Him forever in the rich pastures above."

Ah! how do these words encourage survivors. They go forth like men armed anew for duty and trial. They tell the scene to others. The whole Church rallies round the grave, and takes fresh courage. The dead man, who thus visibly conquered, is like Elisha in the sepulchre—to touch his bones is to gain new life. Ah! look upon this; and will you not henceforward live as those who fear, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you," at the last, "should seem to come short of it?"

SERMON XI.

SIMON THE CYRENIAN.

" And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross."—
MATTHEW xxvii. 32.

This fact is also recorded, and almost in the same terms, by St. Mark and St. Luke; and we may think that three evangelists would scarcely have all inserted it in their narratives, had it not deserved more attention than it seems ordinarily to receive. The circumstance is not noticed by St. John, whose object was rather to supply deficiencies in former gospels, than to repeat their statements. But St. John enables us better to understand the laying the cross upon Simon: for we could not determine from the three first evangelists whether or not it had been first laid upon Christ. This is an important point, as you will afterwards see: we could gather little or nothing from the fact that Simon was made to carry the cross, if we were not sure that it was first carried by Christ. But this is not affirmed either by St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke. These evangelists merely mention that the soldiers, as they led away Jesus to crucify Him, met with Simon the Cyrenian, and compelled him to be the cross-bearer: but whatever we might have conjectured, or whatever we might have concluded from the usual practice of the Romans, we could not have been confident from this, that Christ had borne his cross till it was thus laid upon another.

But St. John, omitting all notice of Simon, expressly says of our Lord, "He, bearing his cross, went forth into a place, called the place of a skull." This is a beautiful instance of the nicety with which the fourth evangelist may be said to have observed what was wanting in the other three: he fills up, so to speak, a crevice, or puts in a link, so as to com-

plete a narrative, or unite its scattered parts.

Combining the accounts of the several historians, we now know that when our Lord was given up by Pilate to the will of his enemies, the soldiers, as was the ordinary practice in regard of those sentenced to crucifixion, laid upon Him the cross whereon He was to die. After He had carried it a certain distance, the soldiers, for one reason or another, took it from Him, and placed it on a Cyrenian whom they happened to meet; and this Simon bore it to Calvary. We have no certain information as to who Simon was, whether or not a disciple of Christ. He is mentioned by St. Mark as "the father of Alexander and Rufus:" but though this would seem to indicate that he and his family were well known at the time, it does not help us to determine particulars. The probability would seem to be, that he was at least disposed to favor Christ, and that this his disposition was matter of notoriety—nothing is more likely than that it was on account of his attachment to Jesus, and for the sake therefore of exposing him to public ridicule, that the soldiers compelled him to carry the cross.

But allowing the probability that he was known to favor the cause of Christ, we have no means of ascertaining whether he were a Jew or a Gentile: for ecclesiastical history furnishes nothing respecting him beyond what is furnished by the evangelists. In the book indeed of the Acts of the Apostles, where the prophets and teachers in the Church of Antioch are enumerated, we have mention of "Simeon that was called

Niger;" and many have imagined that this might be "Simon the Cyrenian"—the surname Niger, or black, being thought to accord with the birthplace; for Cyrene was a city and province of Libya in Africa. If this identity were determined, there would be no doubt as to Simon's having been a Jew: but it is merely the resemblance in name which has led to the supposition; and even this resemblance is insufficient to support any theory; for the same Evangelist speaks of Simon the Cyrenian, and of Simeon, called Niger. We must therefore be content to remain ignorant in regard of the individual who bore the cross of Christ; and we may find that this ignorance will not interfere with the lessons to be drawn from the occurrence.

The occurrence itself, as we have already intimated, is one which may be easily overlooked, but which perhaps only requires to be carefully considered in order to the being found full of interest and instruction. Let us then join ourselves to the multitude who are thronging round Jesus, as, with slow and fainting steps, He toils towards Calvary. There is a moment's pause: an individual is met, coming out of the country: the attendant soldiers seize him, and compel him to bear the cross which the Redeemer had hitherto carried. This is the incident which we are to ponder: we will go no further with the infuriated crowd; but, sitting down, will examine what truths and lessons may be derived from what has just been observed, namely, that "as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross."

Now it is very interesting to remark how the accomplishment of ancient prophecy seems often to have hung upon a thread, so that the least thing, a thought or a word, might have sufficed to prevent its occurrence. There are many predictions in reference to Christ, which could only be fulfilled by his enemies, and of which we might have expected that these enemies, anxious to disprove his claims, would have been too shrewd to help the accomplishment. The marvel is, that these enemies were not more on the alert; that they should have done, or allowed things which, on a moment's consideration, they might have seen to be evidences that Jesus was Messiah.

One would have expected that, with prophecies in their hands which they themselves applied to the Christ, they would have taken pains to prevent, so far as possible, their apparent fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. And yet, as if judicially blinded, they themselves brought about the fulfilment, and that, too, in cases where prevention seemed quite in their power. Did they not know what Zechariah had predicted in reference to the price at which Christ would be sold? and yet they sold Jesus for the very sum; a thought only being wanting, and one piece of money might have been added or taken off, and thus a noted prophecy have failed of accomplishment in Him whom they crucified. Thus again, how easy it would have been—and for men who were seeking to disprove the pretensions of Jesus, how natural—to take care that vinegar and gall should not be given Him on the cross, and that the soldiers should not part his garments amongst them, nor cast lots upon his vesture. There would have been no difficulty, in these and other similar respects, in hindering the fulfilment of prophecy: and the wonder is, that men, familiar with prophecy, accustomed to apply it to the Messiah, and eager at the same time to prove that Jesus was not the Messiah, should have either effected or permitted the fulfilment, thus completing the evidence, which they had full power, as it seemed, to weaken or mutilate.

It is a striking proof of the thorough certainty with which God can reckon on every working of the human mind, that He should thus have put it into the power of the bitter enemies of Jesus to arrest the fulfilment of prophecies. He could so shape predictions that a single thought, and that the thought most likely to arise, would be enough to prevent their being accomplished in his Son; and yet be as sure that every tittle would come accurately to pass, as if He had ordered it by a decree as abiding as Himself. It is not that God interfered, by any direct influence, to make men act as He had foretold that they would—for this would be to suppose Him partaker in their wickedness, accomplishing as well as predicting. He left the enemies of Christ to themselves, quite at liberty to take their own course: but his prescience assured Him what that

course would be; and, acting simply on his foreknowledge, He could place a prophecy within a hair-breadth, as we think, of being defeated, whilst its fulfilment was as certain as though it had occurred.

And we consider that we have in the narrative now under review an instance of prophecy thus accomplished, when it seemed within an ace of being unfulfilled. There is no more illustrious type of the Redeemer, presented in sacrifice to God, than Isaac, whom, at the Divine command, his father Abraham prepared to offer on Moriah. We have every reason for supposing that, in and through this typical oblation, God instructed the patriarch in the great truth of human redemption; so that it was as he stood by the altar, and lifted up his knife to slay his son, that Abraham discerned the shavings of Christ's day, and rejoiced in the knowledge of a propitiation for sin. And whatever the measure in which Abraham was instructed as to the figurative meaning of the offering up of Isaac, there can be no doubt with ourselves that herein was accurately portrayed the sacrifice of Christ—the sacrifice presented, in the fulness of time, on the very spot where Abraham was directed to immolate his son.

But it is among the most significant, perhaps, and certainly the most affecting, parts of the typical transaction, that Isaac was made to carry the wood on which he was to be presented in sacrifice to God. We read that "Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and hid it upon Isaac his son." Are we to think that this was done without explicit direction from God? It is hardly credible. Abraham, full of tenderness towards Isaac, his whole soul yearning over the son of his love, and agonized by the command which he was hastening to obey, would not have laid the heavy burden on the lad, unless in conformity with an injunction from God. Of Abraham we are told, that he "took the fire in his hand, and a knife." So that the patriarch had nothing but what was light to carry: the only burdensome thing—and it must have been burdensome, if there were wood enough for such a burnt-offering as Abraham expected—was bound upon the child; incredible, we may say, had the father been left to himself: for the consciousness

that he must soon pierce the heart of his son, would only make him more tender and affectionate till the fatal moment came. We take it therefore as expressly ordered by God, that the wood of the burnt-offering should be laid upon Isaac: it was a part of the type: and, taking the type as a prophecy, we might justly speak of a flaw in the fulfilment, were there nothing that answered to it in the oblation of Christ. And to those who knew nothing of the exact mode in which Christ was to suffer, this might have seemed one of the obscurest portions of the type: how the sacrifice could carry the wood on which he was to die, was a question that could hardly be answered, until it was known that the death would be the death of the cross.

But the type was thoroughly fulfilled in this singular particular, when our Lord was led forth, carrying his cross. This was, to the letter, Isaac, bearing the wood for the burnt-offering. Yet how near was the prophecy to the being defeated! It was only for a part of the way that Christ carried the cross. The soldiers then took it from Him, and placed it on another. And they might at the first have seized on some bystander and given him the burden. It could not have been indispensable that Christ should bear it Himself: for, on such supposition, they would hardly have transferred the load. And if any of the Pharisees or scribes, remembering the typical history of Isaac, and determining that it should not foreshadow that of Jesus, had suggested to the soldiery, perhaps with affected compassion, that it might be as well to lay the cross on another, it is probable enough that they would have acted on the suggestion, and done that at first which they were ready to do after a little delay. So near may the type have been to the being unfulfilled; so little may have been wanting to prevent the accomplishment of a signal prediction. But God, who could speak through his servant Zechariah of thirty pieces of silver as the price of the Messiah, and be confident that a prophecy, which He made it easy to defeat, would be fulfilled to the very letter, could command also the wood to be bound upon Isaac, and know that, notwithstanding the palpable character of the type, the cross would be bound upon Christ.

And this is the first reflection which we have to make, as we see that Simon the Cyrenian is constrained to carry the cross after Christ. Had we met the procession when a little further advanced, we might have said, This suffering man, who is led forth to death, cannot possibly be Messiah, the antitype to Isaac; for he does not bear the wood on which He is to die. But now we have beheld the transfer of the cross: we know that it was not laid upon Simon, until it had been carried by Christ, until, that is, the type had been fulfilled, and Isaac had reappeared in a greater than himself. And it is the transfer of the cross which makes so remarkable the fulfilment of the type. Had Christ borne the cross to the end, we might have thought it a matter of course that the type should be fulfilled, regarding the fulfilment as assured by the known customs of a Roman execution. But the fulfilment is here in jeopardy; it lasted only a portion of the time; it might therefore have not occurred at all: caprice on the part of the soldiers, or design upon that of the scribes, might have entirely prevented it. And I seem to have before me a beautiful evidence how the fore knowledge of God can assure Him of the minutest particulars, of every turn of human thought, of every motion of the human will, when I find that Jesus did indeed come forth bearing his cross, and therefore accomplishing an illustrious prediction, but that shortly afterwards, in the course, for aught I know, of a very few minutes, the soldiers laid hold on one Simon, a Cyrenian, and compelled him to carry the cross after Christ.

But what induced the fierce and brutal soldiers to grant the Redeemer this little indulgence, and relieve Him for a time from the burden of the cross? We have already supposed that Simon the Cyrenian was laid hold of, on account of his being known to favor Christ's cause, and partly, therefore, with the design of exposing him to ridicule. But it is not to be imagined that this was the only, nor even the chief, reason. Had not the condition of Christ been such as to suggest, in some sense, the necessity of relieving Him of the load, we can hardly think that the cross would have been removed. It may have been that even the soldiers were moved to some

thing like pity, as they saw the Redeemer tottering beneath the weight. It may have been that they feared, that, if they now goaded on the innocent sufferer, death would ensue before they reached the place of execution, and rob them of their victim. Or it may have been that those who were eager to crucify the Savior were impatient of delay; his feeble steps were too slow for their malice; and they urged the removal of the cross, that they might accelerate the time of his being fastened to it with the nails.

But in any case, it must have been the exhausted condition of our Lord which gave occasion to the removal of the cross: it was transferred to Simon, because, to all appearance, Christ was unable to bear it to Calvary. And this is just that incidental notice which supplies the place of lengthened narrative, and lets us in, as it were, to the greatness of the Mediator's endurance. You cannot fail to be struck, when you read the accounts of the crucifixion, with the utter absence of those expressions of pain, or assertions of suffering, which abound in mere human histories of some tragic occurrence. If you except that most thrilling exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" there is nothing whatsoever uttered by the suffering Redeemer, from which you can conclude that He suffered at all. And even this exclamation indicated mental, rather than bodily anguish: the deep and piteous cry was wrung from Christ, not by the tortures of crucifixion, but by the hiding, the eclipse, of the countenance of his Father. Indeed, it is also recorded by St. John, that Jesus, as He hung on the cross, exclaimed, "I thirst;" and this may be taken as an expression of corporeal suffering. But it is very observable, that the Evangelist distinctly states that Jesus said this, in order "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," for the sake of effecting the accomplishment of the prediction, "And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." It seems implied by St. John, that Christ would have said nothing as to his thirst, had He not remembered a prophecy which was yet unaccomplished, so that the exclamation is hardly to be given in proof of the greatness of bodily anguish.

And it might not be very difficult to arrange something like a plausible theo-

ry that the Redeemer was incapable of suffering in the body: for it is evident enough that He did not die through any extremity of nature; He was not exhausted, but voluntarily breathed out his soul: and when you add this to the fact, that not a word escaped Him from which we can certainly gather that He suffered in the flesh, there might certainly seem some ground for supposing, that, though He bore a human form, He was not accessible to human pain. And we need not stay to show you how fatal such a supposition would be to the whole Christian system: for you all know, that, had not Christ been, in the strictest sense, a man, a man like one of ourselves, sin only excepted, He could not have acted as our surety in turning away from us the anger of God. But a man like one of ourselves He could not have been, unless, like one of ourselves, He had been accessible to pain, so as to feel, and to suffer keenly in feeling, the scourging, and the buffeting, and the driving of the nails. It seems therefore as if it would be inexpressibly valuable to us, were it only recorded that He groaned or sighed when submitting to the fearful processes of crucifixion. Had but the least sign of anguish escaped Him—of bodily anguish; for mental is quite another thing; He evinced this in the garden as well as on the cross; but it was purely mental, and proved nothing as to his flesh;—had then the least sign of bodily anguish escaped Him, a look, a cry, a convulsive start, and had it been mentioned by Evangelists, it would have served to identify the Redeemer with ourselves, and to make us feel that he was indeed “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” But a crucifixion without the slightest manifestation of pain, nay, with such manifestation of superiority to pain, that the crucified one could count over what prophecies yet remained to be accomplished, give directions as to a home for his mother, and determine at what moment his soul should depart; this almost looks as though He who hung upon the cross had no feeling of the torture; and how then could He have been my kinsman in all but depravity, my brother in all but my guilt?

But here the incident, on which we are discoursing, comes in, and scatters all doubt. I could not spare this inci-

dent; it just serves to assure me of the bodily sufferings of Christ; it is to me what an extorted groan would have been, a decisive witness, that the marvellous patience of the Redeemer in no degree indicated that He did not feel in the flesh. For why is the cross taken from Him, and placed upon Simon? Because He could scarcely advance, so exhausted was He with what He had endured, and so oppressed by the burden. He had already been scourged and buffeted. He had been smitten on the head with a reed: his brow had been pierced with the thorns: cruel insults had been heaped upon Him: for the soldiers had arrayed Him in purple, and bowed tauntingly before Him, “saying, Hail, king of the Jews.” And there is not the least hint given by the Evangelists, that, throughout this fierce and ignominious treatment, He gave any indication of pain: He might have been more than a stoic, indifferent to pain; He might have been of a nature which was incapable of pain. But when the cross was laid upon Him, and, after a time, He grew faint beneath the load—ah, then was it seen how what He passed through told upon the body; He had felt, if He had not shown his feeling; and now as he tottered feebly on, almost prostrated by his burden, a sinking sufferer whose every step seemed likely to be his last, indeed, indeed, it was evident that He was but a man, in the having flesh which could quiver, if He were more than a man in his power over body and soul. And thus is the incident narrated in our text, and which may be easily passed by with but cursory notice, most consolatory to those who seek to be assured that the Mediator “suffered, being tempted,” and that the mysterious fact of his combining in one person the Divine nature and the human, did not exempt Him from such capacity of pain as might qualify Him to sympathize with the groaning and oppressed.

We tell you again, we could not spare this incident: it would leave a gap in evangelical histories, which it would be quite beyond our power to fill. We have indeed evidence that Christ could hunger, and thirst, and be weary; and all such evidence is most precious, as testifying to the real humanity of the Savior. But nevertheless, the evidence

is far from being considerable; and if you set it against the account of a crucifixion, in which there is not the least proof that any pain was felt, you might find it hard to furnish a convincing demonstration that Christ suffered in the body like one of ourselves. What we want is a clear witness, that He was no more incapable of bodily pain than any other of our race; but just where you would most naturally look for this witness, in the record of those endurances through which He presented Himself in sacrifice to God, you cannot find it in the very lowest degree, if you remove the account of the bearing the cross. I look with a sort of fearfulness and awe upon the Mediator, as malice and cruelty seem unable to wring from Him a sigh or a groan. I gaze in utter amazement, as He is lacerated by stripes, stricken by rude hands, baited by the rabble, and yet suffers no sign to escape Him that He feels the wounds, and writhes under the indignities. And as He is nailed to the cross, and then that cross, straining under its living burden, is lifted from the earth, and made to quiver in its socket, I can but expect the low moan of anguish, if not the wild and piercing shriek; and it startles me more, that there should be deep, sepulchral silence, than had the air been rent with the cries of the sufferer. Is this man, as well as God, over whom pain would seem to have no power? Is his humanity any thing more than a phantom? is it real, if thus, to all appearance, inaccessible to pain? Ah, it is not inaccessible to pain: the scourging has been felt, the driving of the nails has been felt, the fixing the cross has been felt. If yonder victim have power to suppress the indications of agony, his agony is not the less actual, not the less intense. He has already shown that He feels what He endures. He has already given evidence enough to assure the most doubtful, that He is verily a man, with all a man's susceptibilities, his consciousness of pain, his capacity of being tortured. For as He came out from the city, bearing his cross, so worn down was He by his sufferings, so faint with loss of blood, so exhausted by fatigue, that even his remorseless enemies either pitied Him, or feared that He would die before He was crucified: "the soldiers found a man of

Cyrene, Simon by name, and him they compelled to bear his cross."

Now hitherto we have considered the incident of the transfer of the cross, with reference exclusively to our Savior; examining it first in connexion with an ancient type: and then as illustrating the reality of those sufferings through which Christ made atonement for the sins of the world. We have not yet treated the incident as itself typical or symbolical; though we can hardly doubt that an event, which has apparently so much of significance, was designed to be received by us as a parable, and interpreted as a lesson to the Church.

It can hardly fail to occur to you, that, on more than one occasion, Christ had spoken of taking up and carrying the cross, when he wished to represent what would be required of his disciples. "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me." There cannot well be doubt, that, in adopting this peculiar imagery, in making the bearing of the cross the test of discipleship, our Lord had respect to his own crucifixion: the metaphor, the figure of speech, was one whose use must have arisen from the death which He foreknew that He should die. And it is only in consistence with the uniform course of our Savior's public teaching, that we should expect the same lesson in significative emblems or actions, as we find delivered in his sermons or conversations. You are all aware that miracles served as parables; so that much which Christ was in the habit of asserting in words, He set forth figuratively in those actions which attested him to be a teacher commissioned by God. The miracles were thus not only his credentials as a Prophet: they declared the subject matter of his teaching, as well as substantiated his authority to teach. And if the duty of taking up the cross, frequently urged as it was in the discourses of Christ, had been one which admitted of being readily set forth in his miracles, we may believe that we should long before have had its figurative as well as its verbal announcement. But

as Christ was literally to bear his cross only once, there may have been nothing to suggest, or give occasion for, the typical exhibition until that day of wonder and of fear, when He was delivered to the will of his enemies. Then however was it ordered that the truth, so often urged in discourse, should be displayed in significant action: when the Redeemer has literally a cross to bear, that cross is also literally borne by one of his adherents.

And we do not know whether the figurative lesson ought not to be considered as going beyond the verbal. What the Savior had spoken of, and what He had enjoined, was simply the bearing the cross—the performing duties, and the submitting to endurances, from which nature might be averse, but which were appointed unto those who would gain eternal life. He had not spoken of his own cross as that which his disciples were to carry: but now, before He departs from the world, He would teach them that they must not only bear some cross or another if they would follow Him to glory, but that very cross which He carried Himself. And it may be in reference to this, to the sameness of the cross borne by the Master and the disciples, that St. Paul uses a very remarkable expression in writing to the Colossians: "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." There was no deficiency in the afflictions of Christ, so far as they were propitiatory, and if there had been, no Apostle, and no company of Apostles, could have filled up that which was behind. Yet this is what St. Paul represents himself as doing; and we can only understand him as speaking of his afflictions, as arising from the same causes, and endured for the same ends, as those of the Redeemer, and moreover as necessary to the Church—not indeed in the sense of expiating its guilt, but in that of being instrumental to the adding to its numbers. St. Paul, like Christ, was persecuted for righteousness' sake: like Christ, he submitted to persecution, for the purpose of benefiting others; therefore his sufferings might be spoken of as a part of that aggregate of woe, which had to be sustained in order to the salvation of the body, the Church. So that the representation of the Apos-

tle in regard of himself, is precisely that which we might draw from Christ's last instance of symbolical teaching—the disciple bore the cross which his master had borne; even as that laid upon Simon, had been carried by Christ.

Let not the symbolical lesson be hastily dismissed, as though it were not important enough to be carefully pondered, or as though we were too familiar with it to require that it be often repeated. There is no greater mistake than that which would represent it as an easy thing to attain eternal life. Just because Christianity is the revelation of a free pardon to transgressors, the announcement of a wondrous interposition of Deity on our behalf—an interposition through which there has been provided for the guilty, without money and without price, whatsoever is required to their full justification—therefore is it surmised that there is little, if any thing, for the guilty to do; and that salvation asks no effort, seeing that confessedly no effort could deserve it. But again and again must the protest be delivered against a theory so opposed to the Gospel, and so fatal to the soul. There are such things as conditions of salvation; it is not legalizing, it is not frustrating the grace of God, to assert and insist on conditions of salvation. Salvation is a free gift: let the tongue cleave to the roof of the mouth, rather than give utterance to a syllable which shall seem to impeach the freeness of the gift. But the gift is bestowed only upon those who "by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality." Since it is still a gift, it cannot be the "patient continuance" which procures it: for then it would be debt, and no longer gift. The "patient continuance" however is required of all who hope for the gift, required as a condition, a condition without which God does not please to bestow, but which, in no degree whatsoever, obliges Him to bestow, and which therefore, when most rigidly performed, takes not one tittle away from the unlimited freeness of the gift. And thus with all its gratuitousness, with all its assertion of human insufficiency, and all its proffers of forgiveness and righteousness, the Gospel lays an unceasing demand on every energy, requiring of us that we "work out with fear and trembling," that salva-

tion for ourselves, which we thankfully confess to have been wrought out for us by Christ.

In short, the bearing the cross is revealed as the indispensable prerequisite to the wearing the crown. And the memorable thing is, that it is Christ's cross which must be borne. You are not to think that every cross is the cross which the Savior requires you to take up. Many a cross is of our own manufacture: our troubles are often but the consequences of our sins, and we may not dignify these by supposing them the cross which is to distinguish the Christian. Crosses they may be; but they are not the cross which was laid upon Simon, and which had first been on Christ. The cross of Christ is endurance for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the Gospel: "this is thank-worthy," saith St. Peter, "if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." It is something more than self-denial, though frequently spoken of as though it were the same; for our Lord distinguishes them when He says, in words already quoted, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We read of the Apostles of Christ, that they rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name,"—and this was both bearing his cross, and feeling it an honor to bear it. So that he alone bears Christ's cross who suffers in his cause, who has troubles to endure simply because he is a Christian.

And be ye thoroughly assured, that "the offence of the cross" has not ceased. He who glories in the cross of Christ, will certainly find that cross laid upon himself. He cannot separate from the world without incurring the frown and derision of the world; and these are but the modern forms of persecution, less virulent indeed than the ancient, but often to the full as galling and oppressive. And if there be one of you who is not aware that he has a cross of this kind to carry, that religion exposes him to any measure of obloquy, contempt or opposition, let him rather fear that he is not a real Christian, than question whether Christ's cross have indeed been transferred to his disciples. You may not have the cross: but it should suggest to you the inquiry, Can

I be a disciple? And further, let the followers of Christ learn, that nothing whatsoever is to be gained by those compromises which may be made with the hope of conciliating the world. If you truly belong to Christ, you must bear the frown of the world; and all that you will get by evading, or trying to disarm it, is, that when it comes, as come it must, it will be all the severer for having been shunned. Where had Simon the Cyrenian been, whilst Christ was enduring shame and indignity? Not in Jerusalem: he was met, as St. Mark states, "coming out of the country." Supposing him a disciple, he ought to have remained with Christ in his hour of danger: but he had probably gone out of the way, wishing to let the storm blow over before he showed himself in the city: and now he may have been returning, calculating that the worst was past, and that no harm could happen to him from his reputed adherence to Christ. This was declining the cross; and the short-sighted policy met a full retribution. He is compelled to bear the cross. The soldiers seize him, the multitude scoff him; and he has perhaps a thousandfold more to sustain than had he not thought to ward off, by a cowardly absence, what in one form or another a Christian must bear, or be a Christian in nothing but name.

Be ye certain, then, not only that, if Christians, you must carry Christ's cross, but that you make it all the heavier by avoiding it when it lies in the clear path of duty. There is no such way of incurring shame as the being ashamed of Christ. For if you be not left, in just judgment on your cowardice and desertion, to harden into mere nominal disciples, of whom Christ will be ashamed when He cometh with his angels, you may be sure that you shall be punished with an aggravated measure of the very contempt which you have thought to avoid. Even the world respects consistency; and its bitterest scorn is for those who have tried to disarm it by concealing, if not abjuring, their principles. Simon might have remained in Jerusalem, and then have followed Christ to Calvary with but little observation: but forasmuch as he is met, "coming out of the country," he shall be the sport of the rabble, a mark for universal ridicule and scorn.

And yet even in his case, there is one other particular which should be noted for the comfort of the Church. The cross was carried by Christ, before it was carried by Simon. The arrangement might have been different: the disciple might have borne the burden the first part of the way, and then it might have been laid on the Master. But our comfort is, that the cross which we must carry has been already carried by Christ, and therefore, like the grave which He entered, been stripped of its hatefulness. It might almost be said to have changed its nature through being laid on the Son of God: it left behind it its terribleness, its oppressiveness: and now, as transferred to the disciple, it is indeed a cross, but a cross which it is a privilege to bear, a cross which God never fails to give strength to bear, a cross, which, as leading to a crown, may justly be prized, so that we would not have it off our shoulders, till the diadem is on our brow. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ"—and this is the cross—"happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." O see ye not, then, how eloquent and comprehensive a homily was delivered through the simple incident related in our text? It is one of Christ's last and most impressive sermons. He would not leave the world without furnishing a standing memorial, that his disciples must bear the same cross as Himself, inasmuch as, like Himself, they must endure the world's hatred as champions and examples of truth. And together with this memorial He would show, by a powerful instance, that, in religion, a temporizing policy is sure to defeat itself, so that to fly from the cross is commonly to meet it, dilated in size, and heavier in material. But He had one more truth to represent at the same time—the beautiful comforting truth, that He has borne what his followers have to bear, and thereby so lightened it, that, as with death, which He made sleep to the believer, the burden but quickens the step towards the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And that He might effect and convey all this through one great significant action, it was ordered, we may believe, that, as they led away Jesus, carrying like Isaac the wood for the burnt-offering, the soldiers laid hold on one

Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and him they compelled to bear his cross.

And is this all that was typically represented by the laying of the cross on Simon the Cyrenian? Indeed we ought never to press a type too far: it is easy, by indulging the imagination, to injure or bring into discredit the whole of the figurative lesson. Yet there is one thing more which we would venture to advance, though we may not speak with the same confidence as when asserting that Christ taught by action, as He had before taught by word, that his disciples must suffer with Him, if they ever hope to reign. We have already mentioned our inability to ascertain any particulars respecting Simon, or even to determine whether he were a Jew or a Pagan. Many of the ancient fathers suppose him to have been a Pagan, and consider that, in being made to bear the cross after Christ, He typified the conversion of idolatrous nations which either have been or will be brought to a profession of faith in our Lord. And there are no such reasons against this opinion as can require its rejection, nor such even as can show that the weight of probability is on the opposite side. We must be therefore at liberty to entertain the opinion, and, at least, to point out the inferences which would follow on supposition of its truth.

But once let it be considered that Simon was a Pagan, and our text becomes one of those bright, prophetic lines which shoot through centuries of gloom, giving promise of a morning, if they cannot scatter night. It is not the single fact of his having been a heathen on which we would now fasten: for there are scriptural assertions in abundance, that the heathen have been given to Christ for an inheritance, and that all the ends of the earth shall yet look to Him as a Savior; so that if the laying of the cross upon Simon merely intimated prophetically the conversion of the Gentiles, it would be but one in a series of predictions, and might not claim any special attention. But Simon was a Cyrenian—this is carefully noted by each of the three evangelists—and Cyrene, as we mentioned in commencing our discourse, was a city and province of Africa. Then it was on an African that the cross was laid—on an inhabitant, a native of that

country which, from the earliest days, has been burdened with a curse; the malediction pronounced upon Ham, "a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," having been fearfully exacted, so that those sprung from the second son of Noah have, all along, been ground down and trampled on by the descendants of the other two.

Africa—the very name is sufficient to call up a blush, wheresoever there are the feelings of a man. The wrongs of the negro fill perhaps the darkest page in the history of our race. But whilst those who have oppressed the Africans have been just as criminal as though the oppression had not been distinctly predicted, it is vain to shut our eyes to the fact, that the period has not yet closed during which, by Divine appointment, this tribe of human kind is to be injured and enslaved. Those philanthropic individuals acted nobly and well, who fought in this country the battle of the slave, and would not rest till the senate branded and proscribed the traffic in human sinew and bone. And our country did gloriously when she threw down her millions as a ransom, resolving to extinguish slavery in her colonies, but to maintain, at the same time, good faith and justice. We speak of all this as noble and excellent, because we believe it to have been our duty as Christians to set ourselves against slavery as hostile to the spirit of the Gospel, and to attempt this duty at all costs, and, what is more, all risks. But if we were to argue from consequences, in place of from principles, we might almost hesitate to rejoice that the attack upon slavery had ever been made. Notwithstanding all that has been done for Africa, Africa, alas! is as wretched as ever, as much rifled of her children, as though the ancestral curse were not yet worn out, and, whilst it were in force, the effort to benefit could only work injury. But is this to continue? Undoubtedly not,—for every prophecy which asserts the universal diffusion of Christianity must be considered as announcing a time when the wrongs of Africa shall terminate, and her tortured children enter into the liberty of the sons of God.

But where there is special wretchedness one seems to crave a special prophecy. It is such a trial of faith to find

that we seem unable to do anything for Africa, her vast deserts being still the grave of all who would explore them, and the bondage of her children only growing with efforts for their emancipation, that we long for specific predictions, assuring us that Africa is not excluded from the promised glory, but will throw off every shackle, whether of the mind or the body. There are such predictions. "Princes shall come out of Egypt; the Morian's land shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." "Behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there." "The labor of Egypt, and merchandize of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine." I rejoice in prophecies which tell of blessings for Ethiopia. I remember the question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" and I feel that these prophecies belong to the negro. When the eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, goes on his way rejoicing because believing in Jesus, I seem to have a pledge of mercy in store for the negro. But all this hardly comes up to the measure of the case. O for an ampler prophecy, a more express type. There is scarce enough in such passing intimations as these, to sustain the faith which is staggered by the increasing wretchedness of Africa, and its undiminished wickedness. Then let us go and look on the Redeemer as He toils towards Calvary. Who is it that, in the ordering of Providence, has been appointed to carry his cross? A Cyrenian, an African. I read the prophecy, I apprehend the type. Land, that hath long been accursed, whose children have verily been the servants of servants, over which has hung so ponderous a gloom, that those most hopeful of improvement in human condition have almost turned from thee in despair—bright times await thee. Thou art not in bondage for ever; thy chains shall yet be dashed away: the star of Bethlehem, the sun of righteousness, shall yet break upon thy provinces and gleam in thy waters; the anthem which ascribes praise, and glory, and honor to the Lamb that was slain, shall float through thy forests, and be echoed by thy mountains. Not without a meaning was one of thy sons selected to bear the cross after Christ, and thus to fill a post to which

the martyrs and confessors of every age of Christianity have counted it their highest honor to succeed. It was as though to tell us that even Africa shall yet be brought to the discipleship of Jesus. Europe gave not this type of the Gentile world submitting itself to Christ. Asia was not permitted to own the favored individual. America, as yet unknown to the rest of the earth, might not send the representative of heathen-

ism. Africa is the privileged country; an African follows Jesus—oh, the darkness of many generations seems scattered; and I rejoice in the assurance that the land of slaves shall be the home of freedom, the land of misery the home of happiness, the land of idolatry the home of Christianity, when I observe that it was one Simon, a Cyrenian, whom the soldiers seized and constrained to bear the cross after Christ.

SERMON XII.

THE POWER OF THE EYE.

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."—PSALM xxxii. 8, 9.

There may be some debate as to who should be considered the speaker of these words, whether the Psalmist or God Himself. You must often have observed in reading the Psalms, what a frequent change of persons there is, so that the sacred hymn has all the appearance of a conversation, carried on between various though undefined parties. And you should bear in mind, that the Psalms, having been composed for public worship, were used in services conducted by numerous ministers or performers: a voice from one side of the temple wakened a voice from another: chorons replied to chorus; and occasionally a single low strain was heard, as from the recesses of the sanctuary, breathing words which were listened to as from the oracle of God. It often surprisingly helps the interpretation of the Psalms, to observe the change of speakers, and to endeavor to determine who may have been personified by one, and who by another. Bishop Horsley, in his transla-

tion and arrangement of these beautiful hymns, has divided each into parts, and assigned to each part its speaker; and if you cannot, in every case, see the propriety of the division which he makes, you will yet in most find that division itself an admirable commentary on the hymn, the appropriation of the stanzas removing much obscurity, and elucidating the meaning.

In the instance of our text, the learned prelate supposes the first verse to proceed from the oracular voice which pronounced those parts of a psalm which were to be taken as spoken in God's name; the second he considers as the utterance of the Psalmist, addressing himself to the by-standers, who had heard this oracular voice. We do not know that it materially affects the force and beauty of the passage, whether we regard it as thus spoken partly by God and partly by David, or whether we consider it as proceeding wholly from either of the two. But perhaps the

bishop's supposition accords best with the character of the verses themselves; and we shall therefore adopt it, so far as we may have occasion, in illustrating what is spoken, to make a reference to the speaker.

It is God, then, who may be considered as saying, whether to the Psalmist individually, or to every child of our race, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." There is here the promise of direction and protection, but a promise, as you will all see, whose fulfilment can take place only to the watchful and the meek. If there is to be instruction and teaching on the part of God, there must be a hearkening and an attentiveness on the part of man: the relation supposed is that between a preceptor and a scholar: and it is not enough that the preceptor be willing to impart knowledge, it is further required that the scholar be ready to receive it. And that a teachable disposition is supposed in those who are addressed by the oracular voice, you will further infer from the remainder of the utterance, "I will guide thee with mine eye." We shall, as we proceed, lay great stress on this expression; it is a very singular one, and deserves the being most closely considered. At present it will be sufficient to observe to you, that if God is to guide us with his eye, to guide us, as it were, by a look, it is evident that there must be a watchfulness on our own part; the voice of God might force attention, compelling even the careless to receive certain directions, but manifestly the eye of God can guide none but those who are diligently observing the lightest indications of his will. Hence, as we said before, whatsoever there be of gracious promise in the oracular utterance, is addressed to those only who possess and exercise a certain disposition, a disposition to receive and be on the watch for instruction. God does not promise that He will guide those who give no heed to quiet suggestions and gentle intimations, but those alone who are hearkening for instruction, and for whom a glance is sufficient.

And this being the scope and bearing of the words from the oracle, you will enter readily into the meaning of the following verse, considered as the address or advice of the Psalmist to the

by-standers, who are supposed to have been hearkening to the heavenly promise. A certain disposition had been described as essential to all who would have God for their leader: at least, if not explicitly described, it had been sufficiently intimated to be known by every hearer. The Psalmist, therefore takes occasion to deliver a warning against the opposite disposition—a disposition to yield only to harsh measures and severe discipline. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." You see that a contrast is intended between those who could be guided by the eye, and those who required the bit and the bridle. It is as much as to say, you have heard who those are who may expect the great privilege of being led by the Almighty, even such as may be said to be watching his countenance, that they may catch from it the least signs of his will. Take ye good heed, then, that ye be not careless and stubborn, resembling those beasts who need the rein and the muzzle, and whom nothing but actual force will keep in the right path, or prevent from doing mischief. If the promise of God be to those who are observant of his eye, what must their condition be, who care for nothing but his scourge?

Here, then, we have before us a very interesting subject of discourse, in the opposite dispositions delineated by our text. We have said enough to put you in possession of the general idea, and we may now proceed to illustrations and inferences. We shall naturally arrange what we have to advance under the divisions suggested by the verses themselves. In the first place, we have to examine what may be gathered from the saying, "I will guide thee with mine eye:" in the second place, we have to consider what force this saying gives to the exhortation, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule."

Now you will have already understood, that we regard guidance with the eye as proving great attentiveness in the party who is led, great anxiety to catch the wishes of the being who guides, and great readiness in obeying the lightest intimations of his will. We know very well that with a thoroughly obedient and affectionate child a look is

sufficient: he will not wait till the parent issue an actual prohibition, or impose an absolute command; he will take direction from a turn of the countenance, from a gesture, from a movement; and where he can do little more than guess what will be most acceptable, he will act on what is likely, rather than excuse himself by the want of more distinct information. And such a disposition it would appear to be, of which God in our text intimates his approval: the party whom He can lead with his eye, must be one who does not in every case demand express categorical instructions, but who, in the absence of these, will search out the slightest hints, the briefest intimations, and act carefully on what is probable, where there is nothing certain to direct him. We are inclined to think, for example, that much of the Bible, or at least of the New Testament, is constructed on the principle that it is with his eye that God would guide his Church, truths being often intimated rather than affirmed, left to be detected by an ever-watchful student, though not exposed to every cursory observer. And more than this—for the guidance of the eye may be yet more subtle and delicate—it may be that Scripture puts the probabilities on the side of a certain tenet or practice, when it cannot be affirmed that it places it beyond controversy; and if such a case occur, we suppose that those who are guided by the eye, will incline to the holding the tenet, or the adopting the practice, though they cannot plead express and positive command. The child may receive a letter from his parent, containing express directions as to certain points on which he needs teaching, but nothing very definite as to others on which he is in doubt. Of course he will not hesitate in regard of the first; he has there more than the guidance of the eye: and no excuse can be invented for his swerving from the will of his parent. But in regard of the last, the points on which the parent has given no express directions, there are two courses which he may pursue: he may refuse to act at all, unless he be furnished with explicit commands: or he may read the letter again and again, marking every turn of expression, and weighing word against word, anxious to see whether the mind of the parent may not be gathered from incidental notices,

or whether there be not reason to conclude that one course would be more agreeable to him than another. We should pronounce the child who acted in the latter manner, as distinguished from one who acted in the former, ready to be led by the eye as well as by the tongue; he is endeavoring, in the absence of words, to catch the looks of his father; and you will all admit that he hereby shows an amiableness and a warmth of affection which ought to secure for him a larger measure of parental regard.

Let us consider whether nothing of the like kind may be said in respect of that letter, the Bible, which our heavenly Parent has written to the Church. On far the greater number of points on which we require direction, the letter is so explicit and distinct, that if we remain ignorant or mistaken, it can only be through our own ignorance or wilfulness. And in respect of these, it is not to be said that God guides us with his eye: the instructions are express, written down and spoken so as to be known and read of all. But there are other points on which it would be quite idle to assert this explicitness of direction, but on which nevertheless there may be passing intimations, such as an affectionate observation will note, and a devoted obedience will follow. There may be material from which to infer which of two courses is the more likely to be acceptable to God, even where there is not enough for our fixing with certainty; and we should say that the man who acted on the likelihood, where he could not get the certainty, would deserve to be spoken of as guided by the eye, when he could not hear the voice. An instance is furnished, we think, in the matter of the baptism of infants. There can be no debate amongst those who are willing to take Scripture in its plain unvarnished sense, that baptism is the appointed rite of initiation into the Church of the Redeemer. Our Lord's directions on this matter are so strong and distinct, that we cannot be said to be guided merely by his eye, when we administer baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But when we come to the question as to what parties may be duly made the subjects of this sacrament, we can no longer plead express and unequi-

vocal direction. Of course, those who are of ripe age, and make satisfactory confession of faith, must on all hands be regarded as fit to be sprinkled with the regenerating waters. But what is to be said of children, too young themselves to know anything of Christianity, and who, if they profess faith at all, must do it by the mouths of parents or sponsors? You are aware that this has been a much litigated question: and though we of the Established Church enjoin the baptism of infants as "most agreeable with the institution of Christ," we do not profess to say that it is distinctly prescribed in the Bible. But perhaps there is the guidance of the eye, even if there be nothing more distinct. There may be some intimations from which to infer what will be most pleasing to Christ; and it will be the part of the affectionate and obedient to act upon these. We turn, then, to the New Testament: we find a very touching narrative of the bringing of young children to Jesus, that He might lay his hands upon them and bless them. The disciples rebuked those who brought them, no doubt imagining that only adults were fit subjects for their Master's benediction. But we are told that when Christ saw it, He was much displeased; He directed immediately that the children should be brought to Him; and then—a circumstance which indicates that they were very young, probably quite infants—"He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them."

Now, we are far enough from saying that this beautiful incident furnishes decisive witness in favor of the baptism of infants: we have already intimated that we do not think that such witness is to be found in the Bible. But we certainly regard the incident as showing which of two things is the more likely to be agreeable to Christ: baptism is the instituted mode through which individuals are brought to Him to be blessed; and if He have not prescribed the age at which this sacrament may be administered, yet by blessing the very youngest, whilst He sojourned upon earth, He may be thought to have indicated that the very youngest are welcome, now that He has entered into heaven. There is no decisive argument here for the rigid controversialist, who

may tell us, and tell us truly, that the incident in question has no immediate or necessary connexion with baptism: but there is a very touching intimation to the earnest lover of his Lord, who is all anxiety to know what is likely to please Him best. In the absence of express command, I may learn something from that look of displeasure which Christ threw on those who would have kept infants from Him; and this we call being guided by the eye, where no voice can be heard; and we learn from our text, that it is by the eye, as well as by the voice, that God would have his Church instructed and led.

Neither is this a solitary instance of guidance by the eye, though we have not space to enlarge on any other. It is by the eye that we are guided to the keeping holy the first day of the week: if you will yield to nothing but a positive command for this observance, you will not find it in the New Testament; but if you can take indirect intimations, if you can act on what we may call the looks of your Master, you will have no difficulty in confessing the obligation of the Christian Sabbath.

We should be inclined to advance much the same statement in respect of Church government. We will not say that our own ecclesiastical system, though modelled after that of the early Church, is laid down with such precision in Scripture, that there cannot be debate as to its correctness and authority. So far as the Bible is concerned, it may not be by the voice of God that we are directed to have three orders in the ministry, the bishop, the priest, and the deacon. But if it be not by the voice, it may be by the eye, of God, that we are guided herein. You may not find in the New Testament such explicit directions in regard of an ecclesiastical constitution as leave no room for doubt; but there may be—and we thoroughly feel that there are—intimations, and allusions, and hints, which show a probability in favor of that constitution which we regard as apostolic: and ought not this probability, like the expression of the countenance of a well-beloved friend, to determine our conduct in the absence of direct command, whether by letter or speech?

It is the drift of all these observations on the indirect evidence which Scripture

may furnish to certain matters, whether of doctrine or discipline, to put you on your guard against a hard, dogmatical temper, a temper which will take nothing but on rigid demonstration, and rejects probability where it cannot gain certainty. There is a great difference between the proof which may be expected to convince a mere reasoner, and that which should suffice for the guidance of a warm-hearted disciple. If the child, to whose case we have before referred, were to put his parent's letter into the hands of a stranger, of a shrewd man of the world, who will look at nothing but its actual expressions, he might be told that there was very little in the document to which he could be required to attend. But the child himself, intent only on discovering the parent's mind, searches out notices which the stranger overlooks, and of which, when shown to him, he declares that he cannot see the obligation. It may be that the child might be held excusable in disregarding the notices, if the matter turned upon evidence, and nothing were binding which could not be mathematically proved. But the child's desire is simply to do what the parent will approve; and affection will make him keensighted, when, on the principles of logic, there may be nothing to point out a course. And you would all be ready to convict the child of a want of due love for his parent, if he treated the letter just as he might a series of geometrical demonstrations, admitting no conclusion unless he had established every step in the premises, and allowing no weight to any inference or suggestion which could not be made good by the strict rules of a syllogism.

We bid you therefore be on the watch, that you carry not to your daily reading of the Bible the temper which would be so ungracious in the supposed case of the child. If you are called upon to argue with the sceptical and disputatious, you must arm yourselves with the explicit statements which are meant for the hard and unbelieving; for it would be useless to adduce the indirect intimations, which belong only to the gentle and affectionate. But do not always, when you take up the Bible, take it up as men who have a battle to fight, and who must look out for weapons. Take it up as the letter from your Father which is in

heaven, a letter in which there may be hints as well as commands, wishes obscurely intimated as well as precepts unequivocally expressed. Take it up in the spirit of love and of simple anxiety to discover, that you may obey, the will of the Lord. Take it up, not that you may become more accomplished debaters, but more consistent disciples; and then, it may be, will a hundred little gentle and delicate allusions present themselves to your notice, home-touches which none but a Father can give, and none but a child can detect. Yea, you may come to feel, as you peruse the sacred page, not only as though you were hearkening to the voice, but as though you were studying the countenance of your Creator and Redeemer; and you will understand more and more of the beauty and power of the promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye."

Now all which we have advanced would probably have been strengthened, had we swerved a little from the strict order of our discourse, and brought the disposition, against which the Psalmist warns his hearers, into contrast with that which is indirectly commended by the voice from the oracle. Those who will yield to nothing but mathematical demonstrations, may be likened to animals who must be ruled by bridle and bit. There is in Scripture much that is adapted for the management of the restive and stubborn; but its general character is that of a document designed for the docile and meek; and accordingly much of its instruction will be missed, if you yield only to the hand, and will not follow the eye. We shall not, however, pursue this point further: we have probably said enough to put you on your guard as to the temper with which the Bible should be studied; and we must turn to other illustrations of our text, which are scarcely, if it all, of less interest and importance.

We would observe to you, that there are few doctrines with which the Christian would be less willing to part, than with that of a particular providence, a providence of which himself individually is unweariedly the object, so that the minutest thing which concerns him is noted and ordered from above. We all know how easy and common it is to throw contempt on this doctrine, and in so doing to assume all the appearance

of a zeal for God's honor, and of a dislike of human pride. It may be urged to be inconsistent with the majesty of the Supreme Ruler of the universe, that He should give a close attention to all the petty details of the life of some inconsiderable party: or it may be declared to savor of arrogance and presumption, to imagine that the trifling and every-day incidents which happen to ourselves, proceed in any measure from the direct appointment or interference of God. And we have no wish to deny that men have sometimes so spoken of a particular providence, and asserted such evidences in their own histories or cases, as to justify in a degree the ridicule which has been cast upon the doctrine. But, nevertheless, we feel quite warranted in holding, from the necessary attributes of God, and from the express statements of Scripture, that the Divine providence is as large as even imagination can make it, extending itself to every affair of every being throughout the peopled immensity. There cannot be to God, the infinite and uncreated, any of those differences between great and small which there are to ourselves; and if not even the sparrow can fall unobserved, who will suppose that there can be anything too insignificant to attract the notice, or engage the watchfulness, of the Universal Parent? We would have the Christian never ashamed of referring to God the most inconsiderable events, and of looking for his hand in what is thought trivial and ordinary. He is not degrading God, he is not forming an unworthy opinion of God, when he supposes that this mighty and inscrutable Being, who formed the universe at first, and who has ever since upheld and actuated its stupendous mechanism, is about his path, and about his bed, watching his every step, and noting his every want, just as though he alone were dependent on Deity, or alone needed the being tended by an ever-vigilant guardian. The unworthy opinion of God is entertained and exhibited, if he look for his hand only in some extraordinary occurrence, if he remove from his inspection what may be thought every-day trifles, and suppose it confined to events which may affect the whole course of life. This is just bringing God down to the level of man: for this is giving Him the same scale by which

to measure importance. Whereas, by supposing nothing too minute for the providence of God, we set Him immeasurably above ourselves, at a point so elevated, that He cannot recognize our distinctions, but regards as of equal dimensions what to our view appears vast and what inconsiderable.

And, therefore, let the Christian never fear that he may be offering an indignity to the majesty of God, if, in all the details of his business, and in all the management of his household, he be ever on the look-out for signs of the Divine presence, and if he expect to be taught and assisted from above, in directing common affairs, avoiding common dangers, and compassing common ends. He should rather fear that he may be offending that Being whose favor is life, if he ever think any thing so easy that it can be done in his own strength, or any thing so simple that his own wisdom will suffice. And we are quite assured—for this is the point to which these remarks are to bring you—that, if there be a habit of observing the indications of God's Providence, or of looking for his hand in daily occurrences, there will quickly be found evidence that He is indeed always at our side, that whatsoever happens to us proceeds from his appointment, and is removed, far as the east from the west, from what is called accident. If you do not cherish such a habit, you may have no consciousness of the interference of God except in some signal crisis, when a great disaster is permitted or averted, or when some great change passes over the whole aspect of your affairs. There are times in almost every man's history, at which he owns the workings of God, and events which force upon his notice the facts of the Divine Providence and government. But once possess yourselves of the doctrine of an universal Providence, and carry the doctrine with you into every-day life, resting on its truth, and looking for its evidence, and we can be sure, that, in the unravelling of little perplexities, in the scattering of little clouds, in the smoothing of little difficulties, in the communication of little benefits, you will find as convincing proof that an omniscient omnipresent Being is busied with your guidance, as though life were a series of miracles, and every moment saw you openly snatched from the jaws of a new

peril. And to those who accustom themselves in all humility to this tracing in every thing the Providence of God, there will be vouchsafed such guidance through the bearing of events, such intimations in the form and complexion of common occurrences, as will generally suffice to keep them in the best path, when less watchful persons would be at a loss for direction. He who is always noting the Divine Providence, will grow so used to its workings, as to be able, in a measure, to prepare for the future from what he has marked in the past and the present.

And it is all this which is so beautifully indicated by the promise of our text. It is not simply a promise that the eye of God shall be upon us; for that were only a declaration, however striking and expressive, of the universal Providence of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. It is a promise that we shall be guided by this eye: but such a promise supposes us to be looking at the eye: it is not enough for the purposes of guidance, that the eye be fixed on us: our own eye must also be fixed upon God: and it is only, so to speak, when the two eyes meet, that we can gather instruction as to the way in which to walk. And again must we remind you of the difference between the voice and the eye. If God promised to guide us with his voice, our being guided might not depend on our being always on the watch. The voice might force attention from the careless: it is not indispensable that we be always in a listening posture, in order to our catching the words of a speaker. But the case is altogether different, if we are to be guided by the eye. Here the looking posture is altogether indispensable; and it is only so far as this posture is rigidly maintained that we can learn from the directing glance which turn to take.

So that, if you dismiss for a moment the figurative expression, and think only on the truth which the emblem conveys, you are taught that those who would be led by their Maker, must be ever on the watch for intimations of his will, not expecting notices such as even the least observant must mark, but such rather as all but the vigilant may readily overlook. In the little turns and shiftings of everyday things, in the motions, as it were, of leaves, and in the fallings of the dew, must they be tracing the unwearied

Providence of the Almighty, and reading his directions to themselves. These are his glances, the expressions of his countenance, the movements of his eye. Oh! not when He is walking the heaven in his magnificence, robed in hurricane, and speaking in thunder, is He leading man with his eye; but rather when in the solitude of a cottage, He is showing some prayerful and simple-hearted peasant, to whom every sprig shoots by God, and every pin falls by God, how he may best extricate himself from a difficulty, or provide against a calamity. You know not how you are involving yourselves in perplexities, and depriving yourselves of comfort, through the not cultivating such a habit of communion with God, as would cause you to feel continually in his presence, and directed by his Providence. You oblige Him, as it were, to use harsh measures with you, to compel your attention by something startling and severe, because you will not observe those gentle indications of his nearness, those quiet suggestions of his will, which, like a gesture or a glance, are not the less expressive, because so tranquil and silent. And our earnest desire for you is, that you may not only be brought to the feeling that God's eye is ever upon you—for this might merely produce uneasiness, the sense of being watched—but that you may habitually be observant of that eye, so that, whilst it rests on you in unwearied inspection, yours may rest on it in unwearied expectation. You quite know, you quite feel, what would be meant, were we to speak of an individual as guided by the eye of a parent or kinsman. You would understand at once that the parent or kinsman, though he might occasionally deliver explicit directions, more frequently gave nothing but silent intimations, leaving his wishes to be gathered from minute signs, and momentary tokens, which would not escape the keenness of affection, though they might be wholly overlooked by the unattached hireling.

There is a great deal said as to the language of the eye: and if you think for a moment on the look which Christ cast upon Peter, when he had just uttered his third and vehement denial, a look which quite subdued the recreant Apostle, and sent him forth to seek a place where he might weep in an agony of shame and remorse, you will admit

that this language may indeed be marvellously powerful, and go as deep into the heart as the most penetrating that ever proceeds from the tongue. By and through this language, as we have just said, may a child or a friend be effectually guided; and you have no difficulty in understanding the terms, so to speak, on which the child and parent are, if we say that the looks of the one are sufficient for the direction of the other. And we wish that it might be thus between you and God. We wish that you might not be those cold and hard-minded servants, who must have every word written down before they will comply, and who think themselves required to do nothing for which there is not, in so many syllables, a direction which it is impossible to overlook or evade. We wish you rather to be like one of those devoted sons and daughters, who gaze on the countenance of the one whom they love and revere, eager to save him, as it were, the trouble of speaking, and to learn his wishes ere they can be breathed. We desire this for you, not merely because it is far better for you to stand to God in the relation of children than of servants, but because it is the Divine method to teach much through a look, and therefore you may remain uninstructed if you will take only words. There are striking and startling appointments of the Providence of God, and these are his voice; but there are noiseless and more common orderings of that Providence, and these are his glance. If you will only attend to the former, you will wander in a wrong path, till scared as by the shout of a foe: but if you are habitually regardful of the latter, you can scarcely fail to feel always under the leadings of a friend. For come with us now, and let us go with David to the oracle, that we may hear, in sounds breathed from the recesses of the sanctuary, in what way God will promise to lead on his people. We prostrate ourselves before the mysterious shrine, and we propose, in reverence and humility, our question as to the mode in which, sojourners as we are on earth, we may look to be directed by Him who dwelleth in the heavens. "Lord of all power and might, wilt Thou inform us of thy will, through the fearful tread of thy feet, as Thou dost pass through the fields of immensity; or through the

waving of thine arm, as Thou dost marshal before thee, and around thee, the troop of brilliant stars; or through the rushings of thy voice, heard above all human sound, whose whisper raised an universe, and could reduce it into nothingness? Is it thus, in modes which even the careless must observe, and the proud cannot mistake, that Thou wilt make known thy pleasure to those whom Thou dost love?" Nay—it is a still small voice which is breathed responsively from the oracle, the quietness of tone indicating the nature of the reply: and never henceforwards let us expect direction in our difficulties, and instruction in our ignorance, if we do not habituate ourselves to the momentarily waiting upon God, as those who feel, that in missing a glance, they may miss a lesson, seeing that the still small voice gives utterance to this promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye."

Now you cannot have failed to observe, that, throughout this examination into the promise of guidance which proceeds from the oracular voice, we have been insisting on the necessity of a meek and teachable disposition. The whole bent of our discourse has been towards the showing you, that the promise, made on God's part, supposes on our own a particular temper and habit, so that it can only take effect where this temper and habit exist. You cannot be too frequently reminded of this peculiarity in the passage—there cannot be guidance by the eye, unless there be constant attention in the one party, as well as constant superintendence in the other. And when you have observed that the promise virtually inculcates a particular disposition, the disposition of watchfulness, of readiness to note God's hand in the minutest occurrences, and to search out the lightest intimations of his will, you must feel the force of the Psalmist's admonition, which the oracular reply caused him to address to the by-standers. This admonition, as we have already remarked to you, warns against a disposition which is just the opposite to that which the promise requires. If guided by the eye, I am ready to follow the most gentle indication of the will of my leader; but I may refuse to be guided by the eye; I may give no heed to a look; and thus may I be like to the horse, and the mule, which have no un-

derstanding, and which will go only as compelled by the bit and the bridle.

And you must see, that, founded as the admonition is upon the promise, it is implied that God desires to direct us through quiet and tender dealings, and that, if He have recourse to harsher, it is because our obduracy and inattention render needful such treatment. There is something very affecting in this consideration: God only knows how much of severe discipline we bring upon ourselves, through refusing to be taught through the gentler. We now, you see, take guidance by the eye, as indicating a course of tender measures; for though undoubtedly there may be severity in a look, yet guidance by the eye, as contrasted with guidance by the bridle and the bit, must be considered as expressive of gentleness, in opposition to roughness and force. God, if we would but permit Him, would lead us by his eye, that eye which is the light of an extended creation, and from which, as it rests complacently upon them in their ardent waitings round his throne, the angel and the archangel draw their rich happiness. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men:" and we might almost say—if we did not fear to attribute to God what consists not with his perfections—that the eye whose gentle glances we have refused to follow, is dimmed with tears, when the voice must speak sternly, and the hand rise in chastisement. But, alas! man, in the expressive language of the book of Job, is "born like the wild ass's colt;" and how is a look to tame what is so restive and ungovernable? The look is tried, but tried commonly without effect. The glance of the eye is in the warm sunbeam; and the smile of the face is on those many mercies which spread gladness and peace through unbroken families: but the sunbeam wakes no love to God, and the mercies fail to attract man to his Maker.

And what is to be done, when in vain hath God looked down from heaven, in vain turned upon us his eye of loving-kindness, hoping that we would mark its beaming emanations, and trace them back till we were lost in Himself? Shall He leave us to run unrestrained in the wilderness, goaded by our own passions, and hastening to perdition? He loves us too well for this: He would not have

us perish without an effort for our deliverance. But since gentle means have failed, He must now adopt harsh: the hand must be tried, where the eye has not succeeded, and the bridle be fastened, where the look has been scorned. We pretend not to say that this might be illustrated from the history of every individual: but probably the cases are far more frequent than are commonly supposed, in which the guidance of the bit has been made necessary by disobedience to the guidance of the eye. Why has poverty come, like an armed man, on an individual who was long blessed with prosperity? Ah! the prosperity which was nothing but the graciousness of God's countenance, did not lead Him to the Author and Giver of every good gift and of every perfect; and therefore is adversity being tried: perchance that hard dealing will turn him from the world, and direct him towards heaven. Why has affliction come heavily on that mother, who had garnered up her heart in her only son, and now must see him carried out to the grave? Ah! her child, in whom, as the sunny smile played upon his face, she ought to have viewed the reflected glance of her Maker, wooing her to Himself, did but bind her to the present world, in place of pointing her to a brighter: and now she who gave no heed to that look of Divine tenderness which was embodied in her cherub-like boy, must undergo the harsh processes of constraint and correction, if peradventure they may guide her to Him who wounds only that He may heal.

It would not of course become us, as we have already implied, to conclude, in every case where we see the bridle employed, that it is employed only because the eye has not been watched and obeyed. But still, when you observe how express are the assertions of Scripture as to the unwillingness of God to apportion pain to his creatures, you must allow that suffering is permitted because nothing but suffering will suffice; and you may suppose, that, in general, the harsh measure is not likely to be tried, till the gentle has been tried without success.

And this is simply what we think indicated by the promise in the first verse of our text, when taken in connexion with the admonition in the second. We leave you to draw for yourselves the practical inferences from our previous illustrations

of the promise in question. We leave you to conclude the necessity of a prompt and teachable temper, if you would study the Scriptures with profit, the temper of those who are perusing a document from one whom they love, who are anxious only to ascertain his wishes, and who are therefore as ready to act upon hints as upon explicit commands. Neither do we stay now to insist further on the importance of seeking God's help in the very smallest things, and of striving to trace the leadings of his Providence in simple, every-day occurrences. But this fresh view of the promise, obtained from regarding it in connexion with the Psalmist's admonition, is so rife with touching interest and instruction, that we must entreat you to be steadfast in its contemplation, and faithful in its remembrance. If we would preserve our blessings, we must see to it that these blessings conduct us to God. This is the inference, this the lesson. We may consider mercies as the beamings of the Almighty's eye, when the light of his countenance is lifted up upon us; and that man is guided by the eye, whom mercies attract and attach to his Maker. But oh! let us refuse to be guided by the eye, and it will become needful that we be curbed with the hand. If we abuse our mercies, if we forget their Author, and yield Him not gratefully the homage of our affections, we do but oblige Him, by his love for our souls, to apportion us disaster and trouble. Complain not, then, that there is so much of sorrow in your lot; but consider rather how much of it you may have willfully brought upon yourselves. Listen to the voice of God, "I will guide thee with mine eye"—mine eye whose glance gilds all that is beautiful, whose light disperses all darkness, prevents all danger, diffuses all happiness. And why then is it that ye are sorely disquieted? why is it that "fear and the pit" are so often upon you; that one blessing after another disappears from your circle; and that God seems to deal with you as with the wayward and unruly, on whom any thing of gentleness would be altogether lost? Ah! if you would account for many mercies that have departed, if you would insure permanence to those that are yet left, examine how deficient you may hitherto have been, and strive to be more diligent for the future, in obeying an admonition which

implies that we should be guided by the soft lustres of the eye, if our obduracy did not render indispensable the harsh constraints of the rein, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle."

And, now, have we any other illustration to offer of our text, or any other inference to deduce from it, whether of doctrine or reproof? Indeed, we know not that there yet remains any other important view of a passage which, though easily overlooked, seems to us amongst the most touching and expressive to be found in the Bible. But in pondering the words on which we have discoursed, and considering their bearings on other parts of Scripture, we could not help connecting them with that awful cry in the book of Revelation, which is uttered by the impenitent when overtaken by judgment, and which passionately invokes shelter from the rocks and the hills, that there may be concealment from the face of Him who sits upon the throne. We are always much struck at the power thus ascribed to the face. It is said of the Judge, in a most sublime expression, "From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;" and it is from the face, as we have just quoted, that the shrieking crowd implore the being hid. It is as though a look would then be enough: there will be no need for the tongue: the eye will condemn, and send forth consternation throughout the hosts of the rebellious. And if God be ready now to guide us with his eye, and if hereafter, supposing us to follow some other leader, we shall shrink from his eye, have we not not an exemplification of retributive justice, an evidence how thoroughly abused mercies, and neglected privileges, will rise up as witnesses against us, so that the Divine dealings with us here shall have only to be arrayed, in order to our sinking, self-sentenced, into the pit of the lost? The eye which is upon the sinful now to conduct, will be upon them to condemn; and however easy it may be to resist the guidance of that eye whilst it beams forth in tenderness, it will be impossible to withstand its decree of banishment when lit up with anger. Yes, it may be the terrible thing at the judgment, to be forced to look on our benefactor, to behold Him face to face, to meet his eye! Any thing rather than this—even now,

if we have been ungrateful to a friend, if we have slighted his kindness and repaid it with injury, we are troubled by his glance, and would do much to avoid the reproachful yet sorrowful expression of his countenance. And to see hereafter that gracious Being who has unweariedly studied our good, who has spared no pains that He might turn us from evil, who has striven by all imaginable means to lead us to happiness, to see Him, and know Him, with the frown upon his brow—terror of terrors! Even love is armed against us, and we

feel in an instant all the anguish of despair. "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule,"—with what emphasis come these words, when we think on the eye of God as passing sentence, by its glance of reproach, on the scornful and the obdurate. "I will guide thee with mine eye"—can these gracious syllables be ever taken as a threat? Alas! yes. That eye would now guide you, by its look of love, to the kingdom of heaven; but resist it, and that eye shall direct you, by its look of wrath, to the "fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

SERMON XIII.

PILATE'S WIFE.

* When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.—*MATT. xxvii. 19.*

We need hardly tell you that these words have reference to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, by whose direction or consent our blessed Lord was crucified. There have been many disputes in regard of certain parts of Pilate's conduct; but all seem to agree in condemning him, on the whole, as having acted with signal injustice. He would seem to have been a weak as well as a wicked person: at least, his wickedness forced him to assume all the appearance of weakness—for having irritated and disgusted the Jewish people, over whom he was set, by extortion and cruelty, he was in dread lest their complaints should procure his removal from his government; and therefore he did not dare to thwart their will, even when acknowledging to himself its baseness and unreasonableness. You observe, throughout the whole account of Pilate's deal-

ings with Christ, that he was thoroughly satisfied as to the innocence of the prisoner, and the malice of his accusers. The more he examined Him, the more does he seem to have deepened in the conviction that there was no fault in Him, and to have become anxious to procure his enlargement. And when at length he yielded, and gave up Jesus to the will of his persecutors, it was avowedly because overborne by the cry for his destruction, and in no degree because persuaded of his being worthy of death.

There never perhaps was a more singular scene than that exhibited when the governor surrendered up our Lord. Wishing to show by a most significant action his firm belief in the innocence of Christ, Pilate "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just

person : see ye to it." What a scene ! the judge acquits the prisoner, and at the same time delivers Him to death. He wishes to have no share in the murder about to be committed, though it could not be committed but by his order or concurrence. Alas ! for human inconsistency : Pilate is not the only man, who whilst sinning against conscience, has contrived some excuse, and thought both to do the deed and prevent its consequences.

But how striking was the testimony given to our Lord. He was to die as a malefactor : but who ever died as a malefactor, before or since, with the judge's verdict in his favor of his being a "just person ?" It was wondrously ordered by God, that the enemies of Christ should be witnesses to his righteousness. Judas, who betrayed Him, could furnish no accusation, and hanged himself through remorse when He saw Him condemned. Pilate who allowed his crucifixion, stood forward amongst the multitude who were clamorous for his death, and declared, even whilst consenting to their wish, that He who called Himself their King had done nothing to justify his being made their victim. But the testimony thus borne to the Redeemer, however irresistible, in no degree takes off from the sin of those, who, having given it, were accessory to his death. Indeed, so far as Pilate is concerned, it is very evident that what makes him immeasurably guilty, is the consciousness, which he took no pains to conceal, of the perfect innocence of Christ. Had he had his doubts, had he felt, that, though appearances were in favor of our Lord, there were circumstances of which the Jews were better judges than himself, and which might perhaps warrant his condemnation, there would have been some shadow of excuse for his yielding to the importunity of the priests and the people. But not a syllable of the kind can be alleged. The Roman governor was as certain of Christ's innocence as of his own existence : he had not the remotest suspicion that He might be guilty of anything which merited death : and therefore, in suffering Him to be crucified, he passed his own condemnation, and registered his sentence as wilfully unjust, having by his vices so placed himself in the power of the wicked, that, in spite of the upbraidings

of conscience, he must join them in their wickedness.

We speak, you observe, of the upbraidings of conscience : for the observable thing is, that this great principle was not dormant in Pilate, but, on the contrary, acted with faithfulness and vigor. Whatever the sensuality and tyranny of this Roman, he had evidently not succeeded in silencing conscience : he had not reached the state, sometimes reached by the wicked, when wrong actions seem preceded by no repugnance, and followed by no remorse. Through all the proceedings against Jesus in which he had part, there was manifestly a great struggle in his breast ; and it was only a sense of danger, the fear of offending the people, and of giving ground for an accusation of neglect of the interests of Cæsar, which finally prevailed against the sense of what was right, and induced him to consent to the crucifixion of Christ. And this it is, as we have said, which fixes upon Pilate so enormous a criminality. Though backed by his legions so that he might have repressed any tumult excited by his refusal to do wrong, he knowingly and wilfully committed an act of monstrous injustice and cruelty, in the hope of obtaining a transient popularity, or averting a momentary anger. He could hardly have been ignorant that the very multitude, which were now vociferating "Crucify him, crucify him," had, but a few days before, rent the air with their hosannahs as Christ entered Jerusalem ; and he might therefore have calculated that, if he shielded Jesus for a while from the popular fury, he should see Him again the object of the popular favor. But no : he would run no risk : and, therefore, like many others who sacrifice the future to the present, he crushed his conscience and himself by the same desperate act.

Neither is this all : we do not think that the enormity of Pilate is to be estimated from the mere resistance of conscience. There is a circumstance in the narrative of this guilty man, which scarcely seems to us to obtain its due share of attention, but which, in our view of the matter, aggravates immeasurably his crime. And this is the circumstance related in our text, which is omitted indeed by the other Evangelists, and re-

ceives no comment even from St. Matthew. At the very moment that he sat down on the judgment seat, already persuaded of the innocence of Christ, but perplexed by the clamor of the multitude, there came to Pilate a message from his wife, a message of entreaty and warning, declaratory of her having had some fearful dream or vision in reference to Christ, and beseeching him to take no measures against that just or righteous man. We know nothing in regard of Pilate's wife—she may have before been inclined to the receiving Jesus as a Prophet; or, which is the more probable, she may have known or cared nothing respecting Him, till, through a supernatural visitation, she learnt his innocence, and the peril of acting as his enemy. This is comparatively unimportant. It is certain that God specially interfered to work in her mind conviction on these points, and that she in consequence sent a distinct and urgent message to her husband, which reached him at the critical moment when he was inclined to waver between what he felt to be duty, and what he thought to be interest. There is nothing told us as to the manner in which Pilate received the communication. But forasmuch as he is described as taking increased pains afterwards to prevail on the multitude to forego their bloody purpose, we may suppose that it was not without effect; but that, corroborating his own conviction, it added to his earnestness to deliver Christ, and therefore to his guiltiness, when he nevertheless abandoned Him.

And this, as we have stated, is, in our view, the most singular circumstance in what is narrated of Pilate, the most remarkable in itself, and the most condemnatory of the unjust and dissolute judge. We do not know whether we shall be able to make palpable to you all the instructiveness and energy contained in an incident to which you may not have been wont to attach much importance. But we will make the endeavor: we will consider God as acting upon Pilate to deter him from committing a great crime, and therefore to leave him inexcusable in the commission; and we will strive to show you—and that too in a manner which shall bring certain great practical lessons home to yourselves—how this was emphatically done, when

the wife of the Roman governor sent to tell him of her vision, and to beseech him that he would abstain from all violence against that righteous man Christ.

Now there is unquestionably a difficulty in reconciling the foreknowledge, and yet more the purposes of God with the free agency, and therefore with the responsibility of man. It certainly is not easy, and perhaps with our contracted powers not possible, to understand how men can be fully independent in the doing, and therefore thoroughly chargeable with the doing, things on which God has long before determined, so that they are instruments in his hands, and yet at the same time free agents, following their own wills, and answerable for all the consequences. But there is abundant evidence from Scripture, and also from the nature of the case, that there is no human action which is not foreseen by God, which is not indeed so definitely pre-ascertained that it can be reckoned on as though fixed by an absolute decree, but which, all the while, does not spring from the unbiassed human will, unbiassed, we mean, in such sense as to acquit God altogether of being the author of evil. We are to be especially careful that we never reject either one of two truths, because we may be unable to prove their consistency: for the harmony of two truths is itself a third truth; and whilst our faculties may be competent to the determining the two, they may fail us when we would advance to determine the third. The foreknowledge, and pre-determination of the Almighty—this is a truth which reason and revelation concur in setting forth. The liberty of human actions, so that each of us is decided by his own will what to do, and what to forbear—this is another truth, demonstrable from the same sources, and on the same testimony. But the third truth—namely, that these truths are, as all truths must be, perfectly consistent the one with the other—we may, or may not, be able satisfactorily to establish this: but then you must all see that our inability to advance to a higher demonstration, or to give proof on a more intricate point, in no degree affects what has been already determined, but rather leaves in their integrity the positions which we succeeded in reaching.

You will find it very important to bear this in mind in the study of Scripture : for men are apt to think that they must not only establish separate truths, but prevail to the showing how harmoniously they combine : and if baffled in this latter endeavor, they will take it as evidence of something wrong in their previous conclusions. Whereas this is far enough from being necessarily the case : they may have been quite right in the respective things determined, though those things form a paradox which they are not able to remove : a paradox is not necessarily a contradiction, but may consist of true affirmations, each demonstrable on its own grounds, though there may be appearance of opposition between the two.

And in regard to the particular case which has given rise to these remarks, you have evidence the most decisive, that God has nothing to do with causing the wicked actions which He overrules or employs, but that all the guilt rests with men, even when they appear indispensable to the bringing round a Divine purpose. You can imagine nothing more fixed or predetermined, than that Christ should be rejected by his own nation, and finally put to death through their instrumentality. To suppose the Jews receiving, in place of rejecting, their Messiah, acknowledging his pretensions, and giving Him their allegiance instead of their scorn, is apparently to suppose the Divine plan frustrated, and the whole scheme of our redemption brought to a stand. Yet you know that Christ continued to the end entreating his countrymen, endeavoring by every possible means to lead them to repentance, dealing with them as with those who were perfectly free to own Him as their Savior, and whose unbelief He ardently longed to overcome. And you cannot doubt the thorough honesty, if we may use the word, of all the entreaty and exhortation brought to bear upon the Jews ; though you may have a difficulty in understanding how they could be employed in the face of a known certainty that the Jews would persevere in their wickedness, and that such perseverance was the appointed instrumentality through which would be wrought the oblation of Christ. It is equally true that God reckoned, so to speak, on the wicked-

ness of the Jews, so that, in one sense, you might call their wickedness fixed or unavoidable ; and that He acted towards them as quite free to choose, so that, in another sense, their wickedness must have been altogether wilful. And if you are perplexed by any appearance of contrariety between these statements, you are not, on that account, as we have already explained, to cast doubt on either the one or the other ; for the truths of the wickedness having been so foreknown that it might be reckoned on as an instrument, and of its having been so voluntary that it was wrought against remonstrance, and that remonstrance as sincere as it was urgent, rest each on unquestionable grounds, and are noways affected by any difficulty in the proof of their agreement.

And you have an equally, if not a more, striking instance in the history of Pilate. It was not enough, as you all know, that Jesus should die ; He was to die as a criminal, that He might exhaust our curse through being made a curse for us. And He had Himself expressly marked out crucifixion as the mode of his decease : so that to suppose Him put to death in any other manner would be to suppose prophecy defeated, and redemption unaccomplished. But He could not have been crucified except through the instrumentality of the Romans ; for it was a Roman, and not a Jewish, mode of execution, and required, in the largest sense, the authority of the governor. So that here you have a case in which you might almost say that the wickedness of an individual was indispensable to the purposes of God. You cannot see how the plan of human deliverance could have gone forward, on the supposition that Pilate had been firm in defending our Lord. It rested altogether with Pilate whether or no Christ should be crucified : and it rested, so to speak, on the crucifixion, whether or no the world should be redeemed. And nevertheless there was no leaving Pilate to himself, no withdrawing from him the ordinary agencies through which God is wont to influence the will of his creatures. On the contrary, extraordinary agency was employed in addition to ordinary, as though God had resolved to try every possible means of withholding Pilate from the

sin which you pronounce indispensable; it was not enough that conscience should be in full play, though this of itself might have proved that God was not the author of the evil which He made subservient to his purposes—a supernatural vision was vouchsafed, and God actually departed from the common course of his providence, that He might warn the wavering Roman, and strengthen him to do right.

We do not know that you can anywhere find a more singular fact. On the one hand, you have the whole scheme of redemption dependent, we may say, on Pilate's ordering the crucifixion of Christ; on the other, you have a direct interference of God, to procure that Pilate should order his release. There is no denying the appearance of contradiction; but the known attributes of God are our pledge that there is but the appearance, and not the reality. We must again have recourse to the rule which has been established, and not think it reason for questioning either of two truths, that we cannot prove their agreement, which is a third and a deeper. It was foreknown by God—and the foreknowledge made the event as certain as a positive decree—that Pilate would yield to the clamor of the Jews, and surrender Christ to their malice. But this did not prevent God from using extraordinary as well as ordinary means to procure the opposite result, and keep back Pilate from the commission of an aggravated sin. You may find it difficult to understand how the foreknowledge could consist with the endeavor to prevent; but both are definitely stated; and neither is affected by an apparent opposition to the other.

And the great practical truth which ought to be derived from such an instance is, that, however our actions have been foreknown and overruled by God, we shall be answerable for them, as resulting from our own will, and wrought in opposition to sufficient warning and instruction. God foreknows which of you will perish; and He may reckon on the final impenitence of any one in this assembly as a fixed, inevitable thing, and employ it in some way as an instrument for the effecting his purposes. But nevertheless that individual is under no invincible constraint: he is free to choose: and his final impenitence will

result only from his own refusal to be saved. And to make this clear, clear hereafter before angels and men, God, you may be sure, will act on that individual through the agencies of his Gospel, not letting him alone because bent on destruction, but plying him with warnings that he may be left without excuse. The mere foreknowledge can have no effect on the man's actions: if it operated at all, it could only be as withholding God from imparting assistances which He foresaw would be of no avail. But it does not thus operate: God evidently acts towards you as if He foreknew nothing of your penitence or impenitence, but had only the part of a moral governor to perform, who would furnish his subjects with every inducement to do right, and cut off from them every excuse for doing wrong. You may wonder how God can thus, as it were, in one sense make no use of his foreknowledge, whilst in another He is ordering all his purposes by its showings; and you may feel, and perhaps with great justice, that no created being could persevere in using the same means, where sure to fail, and where sure to succeed. But God is not a created being: his ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts. And you are to believe, however unable you may be to solve the questions which the fact will suggest, that God takes means to provide for its being proved at the judgment, that those very actions, which He had all along foreseen and ordained to overrule, were wrought in despite of the remonstrance of his Spirit, and in opposition to as much of restraining agency as could possibly consist with human accountability.

It will be impossible then, for any one to take refuge in God's foreknowledge of his sins, as having made them unavoidable. The case of Pilate is a witness; and we may regard it as written to prevent our entertaining the false hope. You can imagine no instance in which a man might more speciously plead, that there lay a constraint upon him, or that he was under a kind of necessity to commit a great sin. What, when the sin was to be instrumental to the redemption of humankind, when it had entered from all eternity into the calculations of God, so that its preven-

tion would have deranged the whole scheme of deliverance, is the perpetrator to be visited with vengeance, as though there were nothing to excuse him in the predeterminations of which the sin was the subject? Nay, there was nothing to excuse him. He was not forced to commit the sin through its being foreknown that he would commit it. The foreknowledge left him as free as though there had been no foreknowledge. It laid no weight upon conscience; for conscience was in full vigor, and remonstrated with all the energy of the vicegerent of God—ay, and as though this had not been enough, but the guilty Roman might have still pleaded that there was not sufficient motive to withhold him from the foreknown commission, God departed from every ordinary rule, interfered in a supernatural manner, and caused that, so soon as Pilate took his place on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him to tell him of a vision respecting Christ, and to beseech him that he would have nothing to do with that just or righteous man.

But we will now pass from the more intricate to the simpler parts of our subject, exhorting you, however, to ponder at your leisure the very remarkable evidence which is furnished to your being accountable for actions which God foresees and overrules, by there having been a Divine interposition to withhold Pilate, if possible, from crucifying Christ. We wish now to bring you to observe how the method used by God was eminently fitted to prevail with the Roman governor, and how, therefore, it cut off all excuse when he gave up Jesus to the multitude.

It may at once occur to you as in some respects singular, that the vision was to Pilate's wife, and not to Pilate himself. Why was there this indirect communication? Why, when the object was to influence the mind of the governor, was he not himself startled by portentous dreams, and scared by terrible imagery, flitting to and fro in the silence of the night? Would not the admonitions have been more likely to prevail, if thus directly conveyed with every fearful accompaniment, than when received second-hand, and therefore necessarily divested of what gave them their impressiveness? We can only say, that this would greatly depend on points in Pilate's character

with which we have not full acquaintance, and that we are bound to conclude that God took the course which was best adapted, on the whole, to the circumstances of the case. You are to observe that, as the supernatural message came through Pilate's wife, there may have been furnished a double motive to the governor: in addition to obedience to the vision, there may have been the desire of pleasing the party to whom it had been granted: and thus the inducement, when you take the two things together, may have been stronger than had the dream been that of Pilate himself. The attachment of Pilate to his wife may have been great: they may have been knit together by the bonds of a very close affection: and on such a supposition, it is possible, and even probable, that the terrors of the vision would have been more effective upon Pilate, as conveyed to him through the tears and entreaties of her whom he loved, than had they burst upon him in their unearthliness, with all the demonstrations of superhuman agency. It would not necessarily be so in every case: but it is altogether supposable that it might be so in a case of strong personal attachment: and since we have nothing from which to conclude that this does not define the case of Pilate and his wife, we must be warranted in thinking that God took the course which He adopted, because the Roman governor was most accessible through the channel of his affections.

And it is on such a supposition, and under such a point of view, that the incident in question is most replete with what is striking and instructive. We have already said enough to prove to you that God, in his dealings with Pilate, was providing for his own vindication, storing up the material of evidence that this Roman sinned against light and conviction, and therefore brought upon himself all the guiltiness of actions which were to subserve the most glorious of purposes. Since the foreknown wickedness of Pilate was to be instrumental to the greatest end which even God Himself had ever proposed—the rescue of this fallen creation—it would seem to have been important that this wickedness should be clearly shown to have been altogether wilful, resulting entirely from the depravity of the creature, and

not at all from the determination of the Creator. It was not therefore thought sufficient, that conscience should give forth its utterances with more than common distinctness: God would do something which should leave no place for cavil, and which, if Pilate could withstand it, would but prove that nothing consistent with human accountableness would have withheld him from crucifying Christ. And what shall this be? Something supernatural undoubtedly: for God had before acted upon men through visions and apparitions; and, therefore, whilst these were untried, it could hardly be affirmed that the utmost had been done in the instance of Pilate. Shall then a spirit pass before Pilate, as one had passed before Eliphaz, causing his knees to tremble, and the hair of his flesh to stand up? or shall one of the dead be disquieted, and rise as rose Samuel in the cave of the sorceress? Indeed, there shall be the employment of vision, and imagery of terror shall be used to impress the fearfulness of taking part against Christ. But nevertheless, the spirit shall not pass before Pilate himself, and the forms of terror shall not meet his own troubled gaze. God seeks to make the communication yet more effective than it could be made by the wild phantom and the mysterious voice; and therefore He makes it not to Pilate, but to Pilate's wife, to whom he was linked by very strong attachment. He made his final effort on this Roman—the effort which was to give convincing demonstration at the judgment of Pilate's inexcusableness—through the medium of his affections, calculating that there would be less power in the apparition itself, than in the effect of that apparition on one tenderly beloved; and that even if Pilate might throw off the influence of a vision as sent in awfulness to himself, he would yield to it when presented in the fears and beseechings of her who had his heart. And if this be a true account of the proceeding in question; if it were to Pilate's wife, rather than to Pilate himself, that the vision was sent, because the assault was thus through his affections, and the man, not accessible through his affections, may be given up as lost; indeed we shall have no difficulty in showing the repetition of the case, and drawing inferences which should go home to many in this assembly.

It is far, very far from an infrequent thing, that God causes his warnings and reproofs to be conveyed, so to speak, through the channel of the affections. It is the case, in a measure, whensoever one member of a family is religiously impressed, and studies to convey the impression to the rest. It is the case when parents strive to train their children in the fear of God; for all the filial feelings may then be said to be enlisted on the side of piety. It is the case when children are beyond their parents in godliness, so that Christianity is carried to the father and the mother through the beautiful examples, and the modest statements, of the son or the daughter. It is yet more emphatically the case, when either the husband or the wife is stirred with anxiety for the soul, and beseeches the other to take heed of crucifying the Son of God afresh. There is no denying the commonness of these cases: they are continually occurring in every neighborhood, and we are quite sure that examples of each kind might be found amongst yourselves. And we wish you to understand, that, whensoever they occur, God may be regarded as making a special effort to overcome impenitence and unbelief, and as employing an engine which is among the last and most powerful that He ever brings to bear upon men. If He make no way when He attacks through the affections, it is hardly to be expected that He will ever prevail: there remains no more likely method: and the probability is, that the great moral change will never be wrought.

We would press this on the attention of those of you whose circumstances may at all bring them under our foregoing descriptions. Children who have religious parents—God has sent the vision of immortality to those who gave you life, and not, in the first instance, to yourselves: but this is because there is no channel through which Christian truths can reach you so advantageously as through that of parental instruction, through the warm words of a father, or the warmer tears of a mother: and you are to bethink yourselves, that, if the truths, thus communicated, fail to make impression, you are not to reckon on any mightier instrumentality. Parents, again, who have religious children, into whose households piety has gained en-

trance, but not through yourselves—the dream, which has given warning of the peril of neglecting the soul, has not invaded your own slumber, but that of those in whom you have garnered up the heart: and you are to consider that this course has been followed, because there was less probability of your resisting the claims of the Gospel, as presented to you by the objects of deep love. If, then, you can be irreligious with religion personified in a son or a daughter, alas! we can scarcely dare hope that you will ever be won over to God. And the husband, who is yet devoted to the present perishable world, but whose wife has been roused to provide for eternity, and who tells him of those visions of the future which startled her from her lethargy, and entreats him to join with her in fleeing wrath to come—we see in this man not one from whom God withholds the vision, but rather one to whom He sends it in the mode best adapted to convince: and if it be to no purpose that she, to whom he is bound by the closest of human ties, becomes to him, as it were, the medium of communication from the invisible world, the minister may well fear that his preaching will be vain, and that he shall never be gladdened by that husband's conversion.

We are advancing nothing at variance with the important truth which we often feel it necessary to press on your attention, namely, that it is through the public ministrations of the Gospel that God ordinarily turns men from darkness to light. We are only sketching to you a result of those public ministrations, and considering its effects on others beside its more immediate subjects. And we are bound to tell you, that we look with the most melancholy apprehension on that family or household, one of whose members has been converted through the preaching of the word, whilst the others continue careless and worldly-minded. At the first moment, we hail with delight the conversion of one, and eagerly anticipate that the little leaven will leaven the whole lump. But when we observe that no salutary effect is wrought upon the mass, we have less hope than ever that good will be accomplished through future preachings of the Gospel, and almost regard the unconverted members as shut up to

final impenitence. It has to us all the air of a last attempt, when the preacher has been enabled to overcome the unbelief of some one in the household, and so may be said to have sent that one as his messenger to the rest, to warn and to beseech them not to fight against God. It is the attempt through the affections—the attempt upon Pilate through the entreaties and forebodings of his wife. There may be other attempts, and—for there is nothing too hard for the Lord—the strongholds of unbelief may yet be cast down. But as a general rule, we believe, that, where vital religion has made way into a household, and does not spread, there is cause for a more than common fear that it has won its only victory. When the parent is converted, but can effect nothing against the ungodliness of the child; when the child is converted, but sets in vain before the parent the truths of Christianity; when the wife hearkens to the summons of the Gospel, but cannot persuade the husband to be one with her in seeking rest beyond the grave; or the husband renounces the world, but cannot induce the wife to join him in breaking away from its fascinations—oh, it may seem a harsh thing to say, but the child, or the parent, or the husband, or the wife, who can thus resist the claims of religion, when urged through the channel which goes directly to the heart, appears to us to be closing up the last path of escape, and almost insuring the dying unconverted. Depend upon it, it is a fearful thing to have your affections engaged, so to speak, on the side of religion, and yet religion to gain no hold on your affections.

Let this be pondered, we entreat, by those of you who may be conscious to themselves that they are being attacked through what we define as the avenue of the affections. Let them not think that it might be better for them if they were acted on more immediately through the ministrations of the Gospel; so that, as the preacher launched forth his oratory, the terrors of the future world might crowd their imaginations, and the Judge of humankind rise before their vision, seated awfully on his throne of fire and of cloud. Let them rather think, that it may be on account of its greater probable efficiency, that God tries the method of rousing a near kinsman, and

then employing that kinsman to operate upon them, so that, in withstanding this process of attack, they only show that no other would prevail. And let them consider whether this may not be illustrated by the instance of Pilate, Pilate of whom we may say that God designed to use the strongest possible means of withholding him from the guilt of crucifying Christ, and yet of whom we read, not that his own slumber was broken by a supernatural visitation, but only that, when he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him to tell him of an agonizing dream, and to beseech him to have nothing to do with that righteous man Christ.

But now we would wish you to observe how greatly it increased the criminality of Pilate, that the message of his wife reached him at the very moment of his taking his place on the judgment seat. It would seem that he had left his palace without hearing any thing of the dream—nay, that the dream had not then been vouchsafed—for you will observe how the communication runs, “I have suffered many things *this day* in a dream because of him.” The dream had not come in the night, the ordinary season for such modes of revelation, but in the day—so that there was probably something altogether supernatural about the vision, leaving no room for doubt in Pilate’s wife that God had indeed interfered to attest Christ’s innocence, and to give warning as to the danger of using Him injuriously. And Pilate, receiving so sudden and unexpected a message, must have more strongly felt a Divine interposition, than had he heard in the morning some marvellous story of a strange impression on the mind during the usual hours of sleep. He must have perceived that something extraordinary had happened: the vision had evidently been so timed, that the tidings might reach him when he could least question their authority, and stood most in need of their import. And this, as we have said, greatly heightens Pilate’s guilt: whatsoever power the vision could have, was brought to bear upon him at the precise moment when he most required aid: and you may see that the whole thing was ordered, so as to afford him the strongest possible assurance that there had come a warning from God, and to afford it him when

it was most likely to strengthen him to do right.

Of course, it would in a measure palliate his conduct, if you could show that he had reason to doubt the fact of a supernatural communication, or if there had been nothing to force the fact on his attention at the exact moment when conscience required an auxiliary. But though he had no power of examining the alleged communication, it was impossible for him not to feel that something very singular had occurred. His wife, whom he had left but a short time before, undisturbed by any thoughts as to Christ, would never have sent him so strange a message and entreaty, had there not been actually what looked like the interference of God: and it was precisely when his own convictions were urging him to release Christ, that there came to him a testimony to his innocence, which ought itself to have nerved him to the resisting the popular will.

We quite believe that the same accurate timing of warning and admonition is to be traced in the experience of all, so that, if any one of you would carefully observe how things fall out when he is exposed to temptation, he would find proof that God sends him seasonable aids, and disposes events to the strengthening him to resist and overcome. Certainly, if He took care that Pilate should receive a message, just as he ascended the tribunal whence he would be tempted to deliver a wrong verdict, He will not leave without the appropriate assistance any of those, who, being brought into perilous circumstances, are sincerely desirous to keep unsullied their Christian profession. And in regard of others, who are “led captive by Satan at his will,” they have often to overcome obstacles which seem thrown suddenly, and as of set purpose, in the way of their attaining the gratification of their passions. They have only to note the difficulties which unexpectedly arise, and warn them back from some object on which they are bent, to confess that it is as though an invisible Being watched the opportunity, and pressed upon them with a motive to do right, exactly at the turning-point where the risk became greatest of their determining to do wrong.

But even if these special interpositions cannot be traced, you are to re-

member that the whole judicature of conscience is constructed on the principle of counsel being administered at the precise moment when temptation is urgent. This is one of those peculiarities in conscience which will make it so stern a witness against every man who dies in his sins. It is not in moments of calm reflection alone that conscience delivers a verdict on this or that action; just as a friend, with whom we hold serious discourse, may offer opinions and tender advice. If this were the whole course of conscience, we should have nothing to appeal to in any sudden emergence but certain registered decisions, which it might be hard to recall, or at least, to invest with any influence, amid the urgent pleadings of passion or interest. But conscience tenders its remonstrance precisely at the moment when temptation plies us with its bait: the two things occur together as though the one produced the other—the message, which ought to influence the verdict, is delivered at the instant of ascending the judgment seat. It is not the result of any process of argument which is announced to you through the pleadings of conscience: you cannot tell whence the unseen monitor has sprung; but there is no debate as to his presence; and the voice compels an audience, even where there is the most set determination of acting counter to its suggestions. And this, as we have said, will make conscience the most fearful of witnesses against every man who persists in his wickedness. He must have carried with him into every scene of iniquity the remonstrating principle; and as he went after his unrighteousness, he left not behind his counsellor and reprover; but that counsellor and reprover was continually at his side, refusing to part company, urging advice in the precise instant of danger, only to be silenced as a monitor by the commission of the sin, and then to wake up immediately as an avenger.

We are willing therefore to put out of sight those strange interferences which may be traced, we believe, in every man's history, and which give evidence of a watchful Providence, ever anxious to cast obstacles in the way of the sinner, and to furnish him with fresh motives to do right at the moment when most tempted to do wrong. We feel confident that such

interferences are frequently made, so that there is much in the experience of every one of us which is accurately parallel to the incident under review, to the coming of the message from Pilate's wife precisely when Pilate took his place on the judgment seat. But we will not insist on this fact; for it is a fact which is only to be established in individual cases by close observation, and therefore may be easily either questioned or denied. We confine ourselves altogether to the jurisdiction of conscience, conscience which every man bears about in his own breast, so that no one may plead that he knows nothing of its existence. We declare of this principle, that it is its very nature to be most energetic when there is most need for remonstrance, and to deliver its counsel at the exact moment when the individual is urged by temptation. We know not how this comes to pass: it is as though at the presence of danger there started forth a guardian angel; through some most beneficent but inexplicable arrangement, you have only to set the foot in a perilous place, and you thereby call up an adviser, whose counsel is certain to be for your safety. But, mysterious as it may be, such is actually the case: through no tedious process of ratiocination or deduction, but instantaneously, with all the freshness and all the vehemence of a living thing which had been watching an opportunity that it might pour in its counsel, does conscience rise up in the moment of temptation, and, by exhortation and threatening, seek to withhold you from what it denounces as wrong.

And therefore will there be something of the like testimony against every evil-doer, when God shall sit in judgment upon men, as against Pilate who was met by the message from his wife when the Jews were urging him to crucify the Christ. The like testimony—because that evil-doer had equally to go forward in the face of a remonstrance, and to perpetrate the wrong against the warning and entreaty of the most intimate associate. The condemning thing with Pilate was, that the message came upon him in the moment of emergence: had it come sooner, the effect might have worn off, and it must have been unavailing if later. And the condemning thing with any one of us—so far as conscience has to do with the sentence—will be, that we were warn-

ed and tempted at the same instant: had the warning preceded the temptation, we might have pleaded that it was weakened by distance; and of course, had it followed, it could not have aided us in resistance. But forasmuch as the two were contemporaneous, the temptation seeming always to call forth the warning, there will be nothing to urge in our own vindication; no more than with Pilate, who, on taking his seat as a judge, received the message which should have bound him to "judge righteous judgment."

What a scene will it be when this Roman stands forth to answer for himself at the tribunal of Christ! The judge will be the prisoner, the prisoner the Judge. Christ was arraigned before Pilate, and now Pilate must be arraigned before Christ. How changed the condition of the two! Who can recognize in that majestic form, from whose face the earth and the heavens flee away, the defenceless Being, who, pursued by the imprecations and blasphemies of a desperate multitude, stood meekly before the Roman governor, waiting his award of life or of death! Around the Roman were then all the tokens of power: he bore the commission of the mistress of the world, and seemed to have absolutely at his disposal the persecuted man whom his disciples and friends had forsaken in the hour of peril. But now that persecuted man appears as "King of kings, and Lord of lords:" ten thousand times ten thousand angels wait to do his will: and the myriads of human kind, summoned by his voice from the grave, are to receive from his decision eternal allotments, whether of happiness beyond thought, or of wretchedness without limit. And the Roman is there, the scornful man who would not wait an answer to his own solemn question, "what is truth?" the cowardly man, who would not stand to his own conviction of right; the unjust man, who could deliver up the innocent to death; the presumptuous, self-deceiving man, who could wash his hands in water, and think to excuse his dipping them in blood. He will know that awful Being on the great white throne: he will repeat to himself his own words to the Jews, "Behold the man!"—the man on whom I sat as judge, the man whom I surrendered to the will of his enemies,

the man whom I knew to be guiltless, but whom I abandoned, because I believed Him to be powerless, unable to avenge an insult, or punish a wrong. But now, in place of a crown of thorns, there is upon his head the diadem of the universe, and, instead of the reed, there is the rod of iron in his hand, with which to rule the nations, so that "as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers."

And if we may venture to go yet further in anticipating the scenes of the judgment, will not his own wife be a witness against Pilate? will she not be forced to declare how she told him of the terrors which had been wrought into her spirit, through some mysterious representation, of the very events which are then coming to pass? and will not this testimony, even if corroborated by no other, demand and justify the sentence of condemnation, and drive down the criminal to the lowest depth of woe?

It is among the most affecting of the probabilities which belong to the last judgment, that relations and friends will have part in giving evidence against the impenitent and unbelieving. It must be so, where the assault has been through the channel or avenue of the affections. We do not know how you can avoid the conclusion, that the righteous parent will be appealed to in proof of the inexcusableness of the unrighteous child; and that the child who has beautifully exemplified the truths of Christianity, but gained for them no entrance into the breast of a parent, must testify against that parent, and vindicate his condemnation. And it will not be the wife of Pilate alone that shall lift her voice against her husband. Wheresoever human affections and ties have been enlisted, so to speak, on the side of religion, it must come to pass that the sentence on irreligion will be justified from the witness of one who loved and was beloved, who would perhaps have given life to insure happiness to the party that would not be persuaded, but must, nevertheless, attest the equity of the doom which consigns that party to the fire and the worm. Let any one, on whom the duties of religion are pressed through the voice of one deservedly dear—whether the voice of parent, or of child, or of husband, or of wife—but think of that voice as calling down eternal judg-

ment hereafter, if those duties remain neglected; and possibly there will be a shrinking from what it is so fearful to contemplate, and a determination, in the strength of the Lord, to seek forthwith the things which belong unto peace.

Our wish for the yet unconverted amongst you is, that, with Pilate's wife, you might be made to suffer many things because of Christ. O for the vision! O for the dream!—the vision which should scatter every other, the dream which might break your fatal slumbers. I know not what the dream was which roused the wife of Pilate. But it was a dream of terror—it would seem of unmingled terror: she had “suffered many things;” and probably the Redeemer passed before her, trampling down his enemies, and having all his garments red with their blood. O for such a dream again! but not alone: we would have it followed by a different vision, a vision of this terrible Being as ready to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. And it will be thus followed: the dread of the wrath of the

Lamb must produce desire for his favor; and where this desire exists, it will urge to those endeavors which are never made in sincerity, but they are made with success. We want you, then, to be visited with a vision of Judgment to come: and if you would only sit down to a calm investigation of the relation in which you stand to the moral Governor of the universe, it could hardly fail but that the vision would be upon you, and dread and dark things come crowding from the future. And if in every case—and the cases are of daily occurrence—in which it is virtually put to your decision, whether you will crucify the Son of God afresh, or acknowledge Him as your Savior, you would then go up, as it were, to the Judgment seat under the impression of this vision, with the message which it conveyed ringing in your ears, indeed we can be sure, that, when the last trumpet sounds, and the last assize is held, you will look with confidence on the descending Judge, and know in Him a brother and Redeemer.

SERMON XIV.

THE EXAMINATION OF CAIN.

* And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.—GENESIS iv. 9, 10.

The brief notices which the inspired historian has given of the condition of our first parents immediately after the fall, do not suffice to answer the questions which naturally suggest themselves to the mind. We have no power of knowing what alteration they felt in themselves as consequent on the trans-

gression of which they had been guilty. We read, indeed, that, before the fall, they had no feeling of shame at the not being clothed; but that no sooner had they eaten of the forbidden fruit than their eyes were opened, and they knew themselves naked. But this is our only information as to any consciousness of

the change which they had undergone. Whether they felt the sentence of death in their members, whether they could judge, from some difference in the throbbings of life, that they were no longer what they had been, children of immortality—on this it were idle to advance even conjecture; they knew that they must die; they knew in a measure what death was, for they saw the strugglings of animals which they offered in sacrifice: but it is a strange, inexplicable thing, the transition from incorruptible to corruptible, from immortal to mortal; and we may not pretend to say whether the pulse and the feeling gave any notice of the change.

But at least, we may believe that Adam and Eve awaited with much anxiety the first instance of death. It was long in coming; year rolled away after year, and still they saw no infliction of the curse, except on the beast of the field and the fowl of the air. Perhaps the delay took away something of the horror with which they had at first contemplated the threatened visitation. Their family multiplied, sons and daughters were born unto them, and they may almost have forgotten, as healthfulness perhaps beamed from every face, that a day must come when the ground, which yielded them sustenance, must yield them a grave. At least, our first parents may have said, It will not be our lot to mark the irruption of the destroyer. We, in all probability, shall be the first victims: for it may not have entered into their thoughts, that so vast was the disorganization consequent on sin, that children might die before their parents, and the old carry the young out to burial.

Alas for Adam and Eve! if they either thought less of the evil they had wrought, because its consequences came not visibly for year after year; or if they expected, that, being themselves the first to fall before the storm, they should know comparatively but little of its fearfulness. Alas for them! seeing that they were to live to behold the entrance of death, an entrance which should demonstrate, in a manner inconceivably terrible, how vast was the corruption which had been wrought into their nature.

There is nothing more memorable than this—that the first instance of death was the most convincing of all possible

proofs, that human nature had become radically depraved, that it was capable of any wickedness, in consequence of the original transgression. It might have been supposed, that, though the seeds of evil had been sown in our nature through the disobedience of our first parents, time would have been required for their development, so that it would not be until the human family had multiplied and spread, that any thing of enormous wickedness would be wrought upon the earth. But the precise reverse was the matter of fact. The very first that was born of woman, committed the very foulest crime that can be perpetrated by man. There was no time needed for the growth of evil: the nature, once corrupted, was capable of the worst that can be even imagined. You might think, when you look on the savage, stained with some deed of signal atrocity, that he is but a proof of the gradual degeneracy of our nature—supposing him to have become thus frightfully ferocious through the growth of barbarism in successive generations. You compare him with the inhabitants of more civilized countries, and you conclude that it is just because he has been longer left to harden and deteriorate, without coming into contact with any counter influence, that he commits without remorse the most desperate crimes. And we do not of course deny, that civilization has a great deal to do with the form and measure of prevalent iniquity: the laws of a well-regulated society will proscribe, and make rare, many of those manifestations of evil which stalk unrestrained in a barbarous state. But what we wish you to be certified of, is, that, though with different degrees of civilization there may be different degrees in the exhibition of human corruption, there are not different degrees in that corruption itself. Man is the same, radically the same, in one state and in another: he is capable of the same, the very same, villainies, though he may not in both instances be actually guilty of them: the polish of civilization may conceal, and the rudeness of barbarism may bring out, evil tendencies, but those tendencies equally exist, however unequally they may be displayed.

And we can never want other proof of this truth than that which was forced on our first parents, when, after long ex-

pecting the entrance of death, and perhaps, seeing but little to persuade them, that, in eating of the fruit, they had actually poisoned the nature which they were to transmit, they beheld Abel lying murdered, and knew that a brother's hand had dealt the fatal blow. If Abel had sickened and died in what we now call a natural course, it would have been a grievous spectacle for Adam and Eve: they would have hung over their wasting child in unutterable anguish, marking in every pang the effect of their disobedience, and reproaching themselves as the cause of his sufferings. And when at last death had made good his conquest, and seized the first-fruit of that immeasurable harvest which he is yet reaping from the earth, they would have thrown themselves in their agony on the corpse, and then have recoiled from the touch, shuddering at the coldness of the dead. Still there would have been nothing here but what they had looked for, nothing but what they had known to be inevitable: the first dead body would have been an appalling, strange, mysterious thing; but nevertheless as they gazed on the calm, still, features, they might have felt that there was rest in that awful sleep. They would not necessarily have risen from their first acquaintance with death, increasingly convinced of the fearful consequences of their sin. Those consequences might have been presented in their least terrible shape. The dying youth might have blessed them with his parting breath; he might have smiled affectionately upon them, and something of hope might have beamed from his eye, as though to assure them, that, after all, death was not so formidable a thing: and they might have dug his grave, and laid him there to his long repose, half-comforted with the thought, that, although they had brought a curse upon their nature, that curse was less tremendous than their fears had supposed.

But Abel murdered—Abel stretched upon the earth, a ghastly mangled thing—what a spectacle was this! Who had done it? had he been his own executioner? That were an awful thing, thrillingly demonstrative of the depravity of the nature which had been created in innocence. But this was incredible—so gentle, so meek, so pious, it could not be that he who had so recently

brought of the firstlings of his flock, and to whom and to whose offering the Lord had had respect, should have done a deed from which nature recoils, and courted that which was the object of a dark and undefined dread. But if Abel had not slain himself, by whom could the wounds have been inflicted? Alas, when there were yet so few in the world, there was little difficulty in fixing on the criminal. Adam and Eve must have remembered how, when the offering of their elder son was rejected, "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Yet was it possible? human nature had been depraved, but had it been depraved enough for this? what, the brother kill the brother? was man so incurably wicked, that, in place of waiting for the sentence upon sin, he could sin beyond thought in order to hasten its coming? It seemed too bad for belief: Cain no doubt denied the atrocity; he denied it afterwards to God, and is not likely to have confessed it to his parents. Then these parents may still have thought that they had not utterly corrupted their nature: they could more easily leave Abel's death unexplained, than admit the explanation which made a murderer of Cain. But they must have been ready to sink into the earth at the view of what they had done in disobeying God—ay, and the men of every age were taught, that what was immediately caused by the fall, was the total, radical, corruption of human nature—when the Eternal One Himself convicted the criminal, exclaiming in the words of our text, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

But we have spoken hitherto only of the crime which had been perpetrated by Cain, being very anxious that you should judge from that crime the extent of the moral ruin which had been wrought through apostasy. There is certainly a surprising difference, on every human calculation, between the sin of our first parents, and the sin of their first child—the one, the eating a morsel of fruit, the other, the murder of a brother. But we may justly make use of the difference in estimating the effects of the original disobedience. Men will ask, in what degree was our nature depraved by the fall? are we to believe that it became very sinful, capable of

very great wickedness? We never think that any other answer is needed to such questions than is furnished by the history now under review. Adam and Eve transgressed through eating the forbidden fruit: they thus, in some measure or another, corrupted the nature which they had received innocent from God. But the very first being to whom this corrupted nature was communicated, raised his hand against his brother, and slew him out of mere envy, though he had done him no wrong—judge ye then whether we are right in maintaining that human nature was radically and totally depraved by the fall, that it was instantly capable of the worst, not having to become gigantic in evil, but being so by being evil at all!

But we wish now to speak upon the trial, rather than upon the crime: the world was yet young, and there were no judicatories to take cognizance of offences—therefore did God, who, though his creatures had rebelled against Him, still held in his hands the government of the world, come forth from his solitude, and make “inquisition for blood.” It is probable that there were stated religious assemblings of the family of Adam, and that it was at one of these—the one which followed the murder—that the inquiry took place which is registered in our text. God had not deserted our guilty race in judgment on their apostasy; but, having spared them for the sake of the promised interference of a Mediator, He still condescended to hold intercourse with them in something of the same manner as whilst they yet inhabited Paradise. Thus, there must have been some direct manifestation of his presence, when on occasion of the presentation of offerings, He “had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect.” This probably took place at one of the stated gatherings for purposes of religion: and it may have been at the next that God took occasion, from the absence of Abel, to address Cain with the interrogation with which our text opens.

But why—omniscient as God was, and, by his own after-statement, thoroughly cognizant of the guilt of Cain—why did He address the murderer with the question, “Where is Abel thy

brother?” in place of taxing him at once with the atrocious commission? Assuredly there could have been no need to God of additional information: it was in no sense the same as at a human tribunal, where questions are put that facts may be elicited. And in following this course, God acted as He had done on the only former occasion when He had sat, as it were, in judgment on human offenders. When our first parents had transgressed, God conducted his whole inquiry by questions, though we need not say that He must have been thoroughly acquainted with all that had passed. Adam hid himself from the Lord, conscious of guilt, and therefore dreading his presence. “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” God saw Adam in his concealment; yet He seemed to assume ignorance, and required the culprit to make himself known. And on Adam’s then saying that He was afraid because of his nakedness, fresh questions are put: “Who told thee that thou wast naked! hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?” The same system is pursued with the woman on whom Adam endeavors to shift all the blame. “The Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?” But it is very observable that here the questions end: the woman throws the blame on the serpent, and God proceeds to pass sentence on the serpent, without prefacing it with any inquiry. “The Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle.”

But the method of question is again employed, so soon as there is again a human offender to be tried. “The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?” It can hardly be doubted that, in all these instances, the gracious design of God was to afford the criminals opportunity of confessing their crimes. We are greatly struck by the difference in the course adopted with a fallen man, and with a fallen angel. It is a difference analogous to the great but mysterious distinction, that He taketh not hold on angels, but that of the seed of Abraham He doth take hold. A fallen man was within the possibility of pardon, seeing that, long before he transgressed, a Surety had covenanted to be-

come the propitiation for his sin. And therefore might a fallen man be invited and encouraged to confess his sin, seeing that the gracious words were actually in force, though they had not yet been delivered, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy." But there was no such possibility in the case of a fallen angel like Satan, who actuated the serpent; he had been cast out for ever from heaven; no mediator was to arise to accomplish his reconciliation to God; and therefore was he not invited to acknowledge his guilt, seeing that no acknowledgement could have effect on his doom.

It is in this way that we would explain the system of questioning which is so observable in God's dealings with the first human culprits. You must be aware how, throughout Scripture, there is attached the greatest importance to confession of sin, so that its being forgiven is spoken of as though it depended upon nothing but its being acknowledged. "If we confess our sins," saith the evangelist, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Only," saith the prophet, "acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." "If," saith the apostle, "thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus"—for "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." We are not now to inquire into the reasons why the confession of sin should thus be instrumental to its forgiveness. It is sufficient to observe that the whole procuring cause of the forgiveness of sin is in the blood of a Redeemer: but that the application of this blood, in any particular instance, is justly made conditional on the acquirement and display of certain dispositions, which dispositions will evidence themselves in genuine contrition, and hearty confession. So that it is not that, by confessing our sins, we in any sense or measure deserve their forgiveness; but only that confession, when it is the language of the heart, argues the state of mind which God requires in those whom He pardons—a state of penitential sorrow for the past, and of humble resolution for the future. And therefore, when God attempts to draw a criminal to confession, He is to be understood as telling him that his sin is not unpardonable;

but that there is yet a way, through repentance, to forgiveness.

It is this, even this, which we consider indicated by the questions which He proposed to Cain. We say, the questions; for you observe that when the murderer, in his hardihood, had returned an insolent negative to the inquiry, "Where is Abel thy brother?" God plied him with a second question, "What hast thou done?" It may be that this question again referred to the murder: and then it is but a repetition of the first, a fresh attempt to extort from Cain confession of his crime. But we rather understand it in another sense, as referring to Cain's refusal to confess. "What hast thou done?"—it is as much as to say, I have given thee opportunity to acknowledge the crime of whose commission I need no evidence but the blood crying from the ground: thou hast refused the opportunity: alas, then, what hast thou done? thou hast now made thy punishment inevitable, even as thy guilt has all along been unquestionable.

And did the crime, then, of Cain come within the range of forgiveness? Supposing it to have been confessed, might it also have been pardoned? We presume not to say what God's course with Cain would have been, had the murderer displayed contrition in place of hardness and insolence. The crime had been fearful; and we must believe that, in any case, the moral Governor of the universe would have so treated the criminal as to mark his sense of the atrociousness of that which he had done. But there is no room for doubt, that there was forgiveness even for Cain; even then there was blood which spake better things than that of Abel, the blood of Him who, on the cross, besought pardon for his murderers, and who, in thus showing that his death made expiation even for its authors, showed also that there was no human sin which its virtue would not reach. And we do reckon it among the most beautiful of the early notices of the prevalence of that atonement which was to be made in the fulness of time, that God should have thus lingered with such a criminal as Cain, delaying to pass sentence in hopes of obtaining confession. Oh, it is true that there may have been given but feeble intimations to the patriarchs of

that great scheme of rescue, which, as developed to ourselves in the Gospel of Christ, assures us that, though our sins be as scarlet, they may be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they may be as wool: yet, whether or not these fathers of our race had any clear idea as to the mode in which provision would be made for the forgiveness of sin, we may be sure that they were freed from the most oppressive of all burdens, the burden of a belief, or even a fear, that their offences were too great to be pardoned. The history of Cain might have sufficed to remove this. Was not God omniscient? could any solitude withdraw from his penetrating gaze? could any covering hide guilt from his all-seeing eye? Wherefore, then, did He question Cain, as though wanting information, and unable to proceed in his office of Judge, without fuller and more definite evidence? Nay, the patriarchs must have known, as well as ourselves, that these questions were designed to induce confession, not to extort proof. And why did God labor to induce confession, except that He sought to bring Cain to repentance? and why to repentance, except that He might then bestow on him pardon?

But if Cain might have been pardoned, had he been but penitent, where was the contrite sinner who need despair of the forgiveness of his sins? Ay, it is thus that the questions under review might have served as a revelation, during the infancy of the world, of the readiness of the Almighty to blot out our iniquities as a cloud, and as a thick cloud our sins. There were then no gracious declarations as to the cleansing power of the blood of a Redeemer; and there had not passed over this fallen creation, words which have only to be breathed, and its waste places ought to break forth into singing, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." But the trembling penitent was not necessarily harassed with apprehensions of vengeance. There were other visions floating before him than those of an implacable Deity and an inevitable wrath; he could comfort himself with the thought that there was mercy with the Most High, even for the chief of sinners; and if asked on what he rested such a confidence, he might have pointed to God's dealings with

Cain, and have declared that he found grounds of assurance in the questions, "Where is thy brother?" and, "What hast thou done?"

But let us now observe the manner in which Cain acted, whilst God was thus graciously endeavoring to lead him to repentance. If we had not abundant evidence, in our own day—yea, in our own cases—of the hardening power of sin, we might wonder at the effrontery which the murderer displayed. Did he, could he, think that denial would avail anything with God, so that, if he did not confess, he might keep his crime undetected? I know not what measure of blindness he may have wrought for himself through allowing his malice to urge him on to murder. But when we find it affirmed, as it is by God Himself in the book of Psalms, of a wicked man, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," we may believe that there are scarce any limits to the moral hardness and darkness which are naturally the produce of continuance in sin. There may come upon a man who, by persisting in iniquity, sears and stupifies conscience, such a dulness of apprehension, such a confusion of right and wrong, such a loss of all distinction between the finite and the infinite, that he shall be able to persuade himself of the truth of a lie, and to ascribe even to God his own faults and imperfections.

It may, therefore, be, that it was not in mere insolence that Cain affirmed to God that he knew nothing of Abel; he may have been so blinded by his sin as to lose all discernment of the necessary attributes of God, so that he actually imagined that not to confess would be almost to conceal. Under this point of view, his instance ought to serve as a warning to us of the deadening power of wrong-doing, informing us that there is no such ready way of benumbing the understanding, or paralyzing the reason, as the indulging passion, and withstanding conscience. We know not where we shall stop, if we once hearken to our evil affections, and allow them to lead us captive, in spite of that "still small voice" which pleads at some time or another, in every man's breast, for God and for truth. We may not stop until those powers of mind, which are in vigorous play on all other science, are too enfeebled for any due apprehension of an

invisible ruler, and the pale lamp which Deity hath lit up within us, and which may still shed some lustre on natural things, burns too dimly and fitfully to allow of our looking, otherwise than through vapor and mist, on what is spiritual and eternal. With Cain we may sin, till, besotted into a practical ignorance which could hardly be expected in the savage of the desert, we dream of hiding from God what we can hide from man, and are ready, were the Almighty to question us on some matter of fact, to assert want of knowledge, in the actual hope of concealing from the Omniscient what we refuse to confess.

But Cain did more than assert ignorance of what had happened to Abel: he taxed God with the unreasonableness of proposing the question, as though it were a strange thing to suppose that he might concern himself with his brother. "Am I my brother's keeper?" There can be no need of our showing you, that this question marked the extraordinary impiety of Cain: every one shrinks from it: for had only some accident befallen Abel, it was to have been expected that his brother would manifest the greatest eagerness to discover his fate, and the greatest sorrow at finding him dead. Had his first assertion been true, that he knew nothing of his brother, what was to be said of the utter want of natural affection exhibited in the question which he went on to propose? There were then no brothers in the world but Cain and Abel; and he who could insolently ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" when that brother was missing, might have been convicted, by those very words, of a fierceness which was equal to murder, and an audacity which would deny it even to God.

But we wish to dwell for a moment on this question of Cain as virtually containing the excuse which numbers in our own day would give, were God to come visibly down, and make inquisition for blood. You may start at the very mention of such an inquisition, and demand what we mean by supposing a possibility of your committing the same crime as Cain. Nay, it is not needful that your hands be red with slaughter, in order to your pleading that you are not your brother's keeper. We assert that God might come down, and make inquisition for blood, though there were

none upon whom actual murder could be charged. Is there no such thing in our crowded community as neglect of the poor? might not many a man be fixed on, who is in the enjoyment of every luxury of life, and who never gives even a passing thought to hundreds who are almost perishing within a stone's throw of his mansion, never personally inquiring into their wants, and never even employing others to relieve their destitution?

And what is to be said of the murder, the wholesale murder, which, in a spiritual sense, is chargeable on Christendom, and on ourselves as truly as on any of its sections? We speak of the murder of souls. Is it no murder, when thousands in our own land are left without the bread of life, consigned to starvation, through an utter destitution of the public means of grace? Is it no murder, when year after year idolatry is suffered to sweep away its vast host of victims, and we make no missionary effort commensurate with the enormous evil which we are called on to oppose? Nay, it is more than the murder of souls: it is the murder of the whole man, body and soul: for what say you to the multitude whose bones lie bleaching on the deserts of heathenism, a multitude which has perished through the power of superstition, having immolated themselves to some bloody idol, or been worn down by the macerations which falsehood has prescribed? Who will affirm that we are innocent herein? that there goes up against us no accusing voice from the thousands that are continually perishing through the abominations of Paganism? It is not wholly chargeable on ourselves, that these abominations prevail, that they have not long ago been supplanted by the genial influences of Christianity. But have we been valiant for the truth up to the measure of our ability? have we done our utmost towards spreading that Gospel, which alone can extinguish idolatry, and put an arrest on the destruction of vast portions of our race? So far as we have been negligent, so far as we have been remiss in bringing to bear upon heathenism the engines of Christianity—and, alas! how far below our powers have been our endeavors—we have been distinctly instrumental to the slaughter of our fellowmen, the slaughter of body and soul—

what we might have prevented, we may be said to have committed.

Then it would not be a process in which we had personally no concern, were the Almighty to descend that He might make inquisition for blood. And if each would honestly search into his own thoughts and feelings, he might find himself ready to meet every inquiry into the fate of his brother, with something of the question with which Cain answered God. If those who are neglectful of their fellow-men, caring little for the temporal distress by which numbers are consumed, and still less for the spiritual famine by which whole nations are wasted, were taxed with their negligence—taxed in such manner as should imply that they, in their measure, were answerable for a slaughter which is turning large districts of the earth into valleys like that to which the Prophet was carried, where lay, in mighty piles, the bones of many generations—oh, what would they commonly do but shift off the blame, urging that they had enough to do in consulting for themselves and their immediate dependents, and that there were no such links of association between them and the stranger as made it imperative that they should engage in large schemes of benevolence? Am I the keeper of the Hindu, the Indian, the Hottentot? Am I the keeper of the savage, who, on some distant continent or island, offers his first-born or himself to a blood-thirsty deity, the creation of his fears, the offspring of his ignorance? Is the savage thy brother? Is it, or is it not true, that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth?” If all have sprung from the same parents, then the wild wanderer, the painted barbarian, is thy brother, though civilization may have separated you by so wide an interval, that you scarcely seem to belong to the same race. And, being thy brother, it is but to imitate Cain, to plead that it is not thine office to attend to his welfare. It is thine office. There is no man who is not bound to do his utmost for the good of every other man. He is bound, because every man is the brother of every man. The missionary enterprize is nothing but the truth of universal brotherhood, reduced into practice. It is no mere burst of spiritu-

al chivalry, the fine and splendid scheme of lofty enthusiasts, who would carry into religion the passions which find vent in the heroic deeds of war. It is simply the doctrine of a common origin, suffered to produce its natural fruits. It is the acknowledgment of our having had but one father, registered in action as well as in word. And therefore let all learn, that, if they excuse themselves from the duty of ministering to the suffering; if they confine their solicitude and their liberality to the few with whom they are most closely connected, treating all the rest of the human family as strangers for whom they are not bound to care—ah, they may indeed imagine that they make out a very plausible case; for what have they to do with the savage and the foreigner? is there not enough nearer home to exhaust all their efforts?—but let them know assuredly, that, when the Lord cometh, as come He shall, to make inquisition for blood, they shall be dealt with as though like Cain, yet reeking from the slaughter of Abel, they had parried the inquiries of an all-seeing God with the insolent question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

But we have now to consider to what God appealed in the absence of confession from the murderer himself: He had striven to induce Cain to acknowledge his guilt; but, failing in this, He must seek elsewhere for evidence on which to convict him. And where does He find this evidence? He might undoubtedly have referred to his own omniscience, to the observation of an eye which never slumbers nor sleeps. Thinkest thou, He might have said to the culprit, that I require any testimony to assure me of thy guilt? Did I not see thee when thine hand was raised against thy brother? was I not by thy side, though thou didst impiously suppose thyself alone with thy victim, and thou dost now, as impiously, think that denial is the same thing as concealment? I want no evidence: I condemn thee for what I beheld: away, and be a wanderer and an outcast, a terror to thyself, and to all that shall meet thee.

But the observable thing is, that God did not thus appeal to his omniscience: He did not rest his conviction of Cain on the fact that the murder had been committed under the very eye of the

Judge: but He made the inanimate creation rise up, as it were, against the assassin, and dumb things became eloquent in demanding his condemnation. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." And when the Almighty proceeds to pass sentence, the inanimate creation, which had testified to the guilt, is made to take part in the vengeance, as though it had been wronged and injured by the foul perpetration, and therefore claimed share in the punishment of the criminal. "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand."

Who has not read, who has not heard, how murderers, though they have succeeded in hiding their guilt from their fellow-men, have seemed to themselves surrounded with witnesses and avengers, so that the sound of their own foot-tread has startled them as if it had been the piercing cry of an accuser, and the rustling of every tree, and the murmur of every brook, has sounded like the utterance of one clamorous for their punishment! It has been as nothing, that they have screened themselves from those around them, and are yet moving in society with no suspicion attaching to them of their having done so foul a thing as murder. They have felt, as though, in the absence of all accusation from beings of their own race, they had arrayed against themselves the whole visible creation, sun and moon and stars and forests and waters growing vocal that they might publish their crime. And I know not whether there may be any thing more in this than the mere goading and imaging of conscience; whether the disquieted assassin, to whose troubled eye the form of his victim is given back from every mirror in the universe, and on whose ear there falls no sound which does not come like the dying man's shriek, or the thundering call of the avenger of blood—whether he is simply to be considered as haunted and hunted by his own evil thoughts; or whether he be indeed subjected to some mysterious and terrible influences with which his crime has impregnated and endowed the whole material system. I cannot help feeling, when I consider the language of our text, as though there might be more than the

mere phantasms of a diseased and distracted mind in those forms of fear, and those sounds of wrath, which agitate so tremendously the yet undiscovered murderer. It may be, that, fashioned as man is out of the dust of the earth, there are such links between him and the material creation, that, when the citadel of his life is rudely invaded, the murderous blow is felt throughout the vast realm of nature; so that, though there be no truth in the wild legend, that, if the assassin enter the chamber where the victim is stretched, the gaping wounds will bleed afresh, yet may earth, sea, air, have sympathy with the dead, and form themselves into furies to hunt down his destroyer. It may have been more than a mere rhetorical expression when God assigned a voice to the ground that was saturated with human blood. And there may be utterances, which are more than the coinings of his own racked conscience, to the murderer—utterances which, though heard only by himself, because himself alone hath dislocated a chord in the great harmonies of creation—may speak piercingly of the frightful atrocity, and invoke the vengeance of Heaven on the wretch who hath dared to withdraw one note from the universal anthem.

But it is not exclusively, nor even chiefly, as indicating a possible, though inexplicable sympathy between material things and the victim of the murderer, that we reckon the statement before us deserving of being carefully pondered. Setting aside this sympathy, there is much that is very memorable in the appeal of God to a voice from Abel's blood, when there were other witnesses which might have been produced. Had not the soul of Abel entered the separate state? was not his spirit with God? and might not the immortal principle, violently detached as it had been from the body, have cried for vengeance on the murderer? We read in the Book of Revelation of "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." And of those souls we are told, that "they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It may therefore be, that the souls of the dead cry for judgment upon those who

have compassed their death: why then might not the soul of Abel, rather than his blood, have been adduced by God? even had it been silent, surely its very presence in the invisible world gave a more impressive testimony than the stream which had crimsoned the ground.

In answer to this, we are to consider, in the first place, that it did not please God to vouchsafe any clear revelation of the invisible state, during the earlier ages of the world. We cannot determine what degree of acquaintance our first parents possessed with a life after death; but when we remember what cloud and darkness hung over the grave, even to those who lived under the Jewish economy, we may well doubt whether Adam and Eve had any clear apprehension of a state in which wickedness would be eternally punished, and righteousness everlastingly rewarded. And it is to my mind one of the most touching of the circumstances which characterize their condition, that God, in making inquisition for the blood of their son, should have given a voice, as it were, to the dead body, but none to the living soul. Oh, how soothingly would it have fallen on the ear of the agonized parents, had God spoken of Abel as existing in the invisible world, as testifying by his presence in some bright scene which the spoiler could not enter, that the hand of violence had forced him from the earth. That Abel had fallen by the hand of his brother, was the most terrible of all possible proofs, that the original transgression had corrupted human nature to the core. But it would have done much— not indeed to counterbalance this proof, but to soften the anguish which it could not fail to produce—had there been any intimation that the death of the body was not the death of the man, and that Cain had but removed Abel from a scene of trouble to one of deep repose.

This however was denied them: they must struggle on through darkness, sustained only by a dim conjecture of life and immortality. Indeed, indeed, I know not whether there be any thing more affecting in the history of our first parents. Oh, bless God, ye who have had to sorrow over dead children, that ye live when life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel. Your's has not been the deep and desolate bitterness of those on whom fell no

shinings from futurity. Unto you have come sweet whisperings from the invisible world, whisperings as of the one whom you loved, telling you of a better land, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." But alas for Adam and Eve! their's was grief, stern, dark, unmingled. Taught by the foul deed of Cain how fatally they had tainted their nature, they were not also taught, by any information as to the condition of Abel, how nevertheless that nature might be purified and exalted. They listen with all earnestness as God prosecutes inquiry into the murder. Perhaps some consolatory word will be dropped, some expression which shall partially disclose to them the secrets of the grave. But they listen in vain; the time has not yet come when God would please to reveal another world; and it must have been almost as though there had been a repetition of the stroke which had made them so heavy at heart, when in place of any notice of the soul of Abel, they only heard God declare, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

But indeed there are better things to be said on the fact, that it was Abel's blood, and not his soul, which found a voice to demand vengeance on the murderer. The souls, as we have seen from the Book of Revelation, of numbers who had fallen by the sword of persecution, cried to God that He would judge those whose cruelty had forced them from the earth. But we can hardly interpret this cry as that of a desire for revenge,—revenge, that is, for wrongs individually and personally received. There were something quite at variance with our every notion of glorified spirits, in supposing that, in place of forgiving their enemies, they long and pray for their being destroyed. The best interpretation therefore, which we can put on the passage in the Book of Revelation, would seem to be, that, forasmuch as the persecutors were the enemies of God, and the great desire of the souls of the righteous must be for the glory of God, the cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true!" denotes intense longing for the predicted season when the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, when all opposing powers shall finally yield to that of the Mediator.

There may be a difficulty in clearing a desire for vengeance of all unholy passion, when the parties on whom the vengeance is to descend have cruelly wronged those by whom the desire is expressed: but we must believe that hereafter, when every lesser feeling shall be absorbed in those of love of God and zeal for his honor, there will be a holy longing for the overthrow of the inveterate foes of the Church, which shall have no alliance whatsoever with what we now call vindictiveness, though these foes may have been personally injurious to the glorified spirits.

If there were nothing to be avenged but wrongs done to themselves, it cannot be thought that souls in the separate state would cry for the lighting down of God's mighty arm. But it is also God who has been wronged; it is God's honor which has to be vindicated; and souls which would breathe only forgiveness for any personal injury, may manifest nothing but the ardency of the holiest affection in breathing desires for vengeance on those who have done despite to the Creator and Redeemer.

And yet, though we cannot charge any thing of human vindictiveness on the souls of them slain for the word of God, which St. John saw beneath the altar, we must all feel as though there were something beautifully expressive in the silence maintained by the spirit of Abel. It would indeed, as we have said, have served as a Revelation, full of consolatory truth to Adam and Eve, had God assigned a voice to the soul, rather than to the blood, of their slaughtered son. But who would not have felt as though it had been to make Abel revengeful, to represent his spirit as crying to the Almighty for judgment on his murderer? The case would have been different from that of the souls under the altar, inasmuch as the wrong had been more evidently personal, directed against the individual, rather than against a body, to injure which was to offer insult to God. And we could not therefore have so easily disentangled the expressed desire for vengeance from all those earthly and sinful feelings which cannot, as we know, have any subsistence in the disembodied souls of the righteous. But now we seem to find, in the silence of Abel's spirit, the same forbearance, the same eagerness for the good of the cruel and

injurious, as was expressed by Christ when being crucified, and by Stephen when being stoned. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," exclaimed Jesus as his murderers nailed Him to the tree. And just ere he fell asleep, Stephen "kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." We know not how Abel, the first martyr, died. We are not told what was his last utterance, nor what the look which he cast upon Cain, as he felt that life was ebbing fast away. But we seem able to follow his spirit into the separate state; and we may venture to gather that he died with forgiveness on his lips, from the fact that he entered God's presence with no complaint against his murderer. He could not cause that the dumb should not speak. He could not prevent the ground, which had drunk in his blood, from crying unto God to avenge the foul outrage. But the immortal principle, which might have poured forth the narrative of the crime, and have besought that the Lord, to whom vengeance belongeth, would interpose for the punishment of the criminal—this appears to have been meekly silent, as though it would have shielded the murderer, rather than have exposed him to his just retribution.

Oh, I cannot but think that in God's reference to the blood of Abel as the only accuser, there was a designed and beautiful lesson as to the forgiveness of injuries. God was not pleased to give, at the moment, an explicit revelation as to the immortality of Abel. But so far as that immortality was ascertained from other sources, and in proportion that, in the progress of time, it grew into an article of faith, there was a most expressive statement as to the character which God requires in those whom He accepts, in the statement that it was not Abel, but only his blood, which cried out for vengeance. You know, that, in the Gospel, our obtaining forgiveness from God is made conditional on our forgiving those by whom we may be wronged. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And was not the same truth taught, by example, if not by word, from the earliest days, seeing

What, when God would bring an accusing voice against Cain, He could only find it in the dumb earth reeking with blood, though the soul of Abel was before Him, and might have been thought ready to give witness with an exceeding great and bitter cry? Abel forgave his murderer—otherwise could he not have been forgiven of God—and we learn that he forgave his murderer, from the fact, that it was only his blood which cried aloud for vengeance.

Thus is there something very instructive in the absence of any voice but the voice from the ground. There is also matter for deep thought in the fact, that it was blood which sent up so penetrating a cry. It was like telling the young world of the power which there would be in blood to gain audience of the Most High. I do not say, that, whilst there were yet but feeble notices of a Redeemer, men might gather, from the energy ascribed to the blood of Abel, the virtue which would be resident in that of Christ. But to ourselves, unto whom has been laid open the great scheme of redemption, it may certainly come like one of the first notices of atonement through blood, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, that so mighty a voice went up in accusation of Cain. What was there in blood, that it could give, as it were, life to inanimate things, causing them to become vocal, so that the very Godhead Himself was moved by the sound? The utterance, we think, did but predict that when one,

to whom Abel had had respect in presenting in sacrifice the firstlings of his flock, should fall, as Abel fell, beneath the malice of the wicked, there would go up from the shed blood a voice that would be hearkened to in the heavenly courts, and prevail to the obtaining whatsoever it should ask.

Blessed be God that this blood does not plead for vengeance alone. It does plead for vengeance on the obdurate, who, like Cain, resist the invitation of God: but it pleads also for the pardon of the murderers, so that it can expiate the crime which it proves and attests. And whilst the blood of the slain pleads for us, the slain Himself is not silent. Abel could only refrain from speech in the invisible world—but Christ is not merely not our accuser, He is even our advocate. O blessed and glorious difference! We have not, like Cain, raised the hand to slay a brother, but alas! we have destroyed ourselves; and the cry for vengeance ascends from a creation which “groaneth and travaileth” through this our iniquity. But this cry is lost in a mightier, the cry, “It is finished,” the cry of a surety, the cry of an Intercessor. Let us only then take heed that we copy not Cain in his insolent refusal to acknowledge his guilt, and though, as against him, there be a cry from the earth, demanding our punishment, there will be a cry from the firmament which was silent, if it did not accuse the murderer—“Deliver them from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom.”

THE first five of the following Sermons were preached by the appointment of his Grace the Duke of Wellington, and printed by the Corporation of Trinity House for their own use. It has been intimated to the author by several friends, that their publication in the present form would be acceptable, more especially if combined with other of his Sermons delivered upon public occasions. He has therefore been induced to commit this Volume to the press, hoping that it may not altogether disappoint the expectation so kindly entertained.

East India College,
Nov. 15, 1846.

S E R M O N S

PREACHED ON PUBLIC OCCASIONS.

S E R M O N I . *

THE GREATNESS OF BEING USEFUL.

* But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.—ST. MATTHEW XX. 26, 27, 28.

We can easily suppose, that, if we introduced these words, without illustration or comment, into a circle of men unaccustomed to the acting on high Christian principles, they would be received with feelings of scorn and dislike. If in addressing an individual, whose prime object it is to make himself distinguished upon earth, we were to recommend to him the becoming the servant of his fellow-men, as the surest mode of reaching the coveted eminence, it is more than probable that our counsel, on first hearing, would be considered as an insult. Yet we believe it susceptible of the clearest proof, that in the precept or direction of our text lies the secret of that chieftaincy which alone deserves the name. We may venture to affirm, that it is to those who are the servants and ministers of their fellow-men that the world itself attaches the appellation of great; and that in proportion as the service and ministry are more laborious,

and extend over broader districts of the earth, is there greater alacrity in bestowing the title. We will not deny that there may be apparent exceptions, and that some have been designated great, though even flattery could scarce urge that they had rendered signal service to others. But however it may sometimes happen that those who tread a dazzling, but destructive, career, win from the world the reputation of greatness, the falseness of the ascription is sooner or later acknowledged. When a man's achievements have become matter of history, and we can sit in judgment on his pretensions without the bias caused by too great proximity, the verdict is commonly reversed: neither the boldness of his undertakings, nor the brilliancy of his success, will prevail on us to ratify a decision which awards the denomination of great to one who has wrought injury, and not benefit, to the mass of humankind.

It will, we think, be found very appropriate to the present occasion and circumstances, that we should show you

* Preached before the Corporation of Trinity House, on Trinity Monday, 1838.

how the secret of greatness is contained in those words of our blessed Savior which we have chosen as our text. Our assertion is, that, in awarding the palm of true greatness, men are accustomed, however unconsciously, to act upon the principle, that whosoever will be chief must be the servant of all. To make good this assertion, it will only be necessary that we observe the cases in which, by universal consent, the title "great" is bestowed.

Now if a man have displayed extraordinary patriotism, so that, when his country has bent beneath the yoke of oppression, there have been the stirrings within him of an indomitable resolve to overthrow tyranny, and correspondent strivings to wrench off the chain by which his native land was bound—we may safely affirm of this man, that his name will be shrined in the hearts, and woven into the songs, of successive generations; and that there will be a thorough unanimity, amongst all who hear his deeds, as to the justice of assigning him the appellation of great. You will not find a dissentient voice, when opinions are being gathered as to the merits of one who stood up nobly in the face of the enemies of liberty, and won for a country, trampled down by a despot, that blessing of freedom which gives its worth to every other. Yet what has this patriot made himself but the servant of his countrymen? It was in order to the ministering to the well-being of thousands, that he threw himself into the breach, and challenged tyranny to the battle. It was for the sake of securing the rights of those who trod the same soil with himself, that he arose as the champion of the wretched and injured. We will not indeed say that his motives were unmixed, so that he has been actuated by nothing having alliance with selfishness. On the contrary, there may have been little which could rightly be called disinterested; and his actions, if analyzed in their springs, might lose half their splendor. But, practically at least, whatever may have been his design, this patriot has acted as the minister to others; and it is simply because he has so acted, that he has encircled himself with imperishable renown. He has pleaded the cause of others, and dashed away the chain of others, and wrought a vast deliverance for others;

and the result is the same as though, with a fine forgetfulness of self, he had devoted every energy and every resource to the good of others, and cast time, and talent, and strength, into one mighty sacrifice, that others might be advantaged by the prodigal oblation. So that, whilst a world is pronouncing his panegyric, and his fame seems only to increase as it is borne along from one age to another, we can confidently point him out, as exemplifying the truth of what Christ said to his disciples in our text: for if you would describe the mode in which he has gained his pre-eminent honors, you could not do it more accurately than by representing him as having acted on the maxim, "he who would be chief amongst you, let him be your servant."

The case is the same with the philosopher as with the patriot. We gladly give our praises to the individual, who, by the force of genius, and the labor of research, has enlarged the sphere of human knowledge, and pushed discovery further into the mysteries of nature. There is not a greater benefactor to the world than he who increases our acquaintance with the properties of matter, and lays open to us agencies which may be successfully employed in the occupations of life. We are not, for example, to regard the astronomer as a man busied indeed with high and brilliant speculation, but whose lofty calling is altogether unconnected with those of less-gifted spirits. None know better than many of the present audience, that, in his searchings over the beautiful and spangled face of heaven, he is gathering material for the guide-book by which the mariner shall make his way across the trackless waste of waters; and that thus are his sublime musings, and his mystic calculations, subservient to every operation of trade, and every movement of commerce. Truth is not isolated and uninfluential thing: let it once be discovered, and a thousand consequences may be traced, ramifying into the minutest concerns and the most ordinary occurrences. Accordingly, he who labors in the mine of truth, and presents to the world the results of his investigations, furnishes his fellow-men with new principles on which to act in the business of life, and thus equips them for fresh enterprises, and instructs

them how to add to the sum total of happiness. We need not exemplify this in particular instances. You are all aware how scientific research is turned to account in everyday life, and how the very lowest of our people enjoy, in one way or another, the fruits of discoveries which are due to the marvellous sagacity, and the repeated experiments, of those who rank foremost in the annals of philosophy. And thus is it evident that the man who is great in science, is great in the power of serving his fellow-men, and that it is this latter greatness which insures him their applauses. If his discoveries were of no benefit to the many; if they opened no means by which enjoyments might be multiplied, toil diminished, or dangers averted; his name would be known only within a limited circle, and there would be nothing that approached to a general recognition of superiority. But just in proportion that his discoveries bear on the universal happiness, will he be the object of the universal approbation; in proportion, that is, as he has been of service to many, will the many concede to him a high degree of honor; so that with philosophy as with patriotism, the achieved greatness will but illustrate the truth of the saying, "he who would be chief amongst you, let him be your servant."

And if further evidence be needed, that, in giving utterance to our text, Christ was not introducing a strange precept, but one which is virtually acted on by the world, may we not urge generally that the men who are most eminent in life, are the men who are most literally the servants of the public? If a man be distinguished as a warrior, and if, by his skill and bravery, he have been enabled to secure victory to his country's arms, and to beat back invaders from his country's shores, there is not an individual in the meanest cottage of the land, in whose service this great leader has not been engaged, or for whose benefit he has not dared hardships and perilled life. Nobles and princes may be foremost in doing him homage, as having upheld the majesty of a state, and defended its throne against a host of assailants. But he fought equally for the poor villager and the industrious artisan, for the helpless infant and the lonely widow: search the land, and

there is not one to whom he has not ministered, not one for whom he has not labored: and if then his name be, as it ought to be, a familiar and an honored word in every hovel as in every palace, awakening the grateful applause of all ranks and ages, may we not justly declare of him, that he has become great amongst his countrymen through being their servant?

The individual again who gains renown as a statesman, who serves his country in the senate as the warrior in the field, is the minister to all classes, so that the very lowest have the profit of his toils. You have only to regard him as conducting the complicated affairs of government, turning all the energies of a comprehensive mind on preserving the liberty, guarding the property, and augmenting the happiness, of a community, and you cannot fail to consider him as, in the strictest sense, the servant of the many, as employed for their welfare, whatever the reward reaped in a gratified ambition. Yea, and it is the being thus employed which constitutes his greatness: for he will rapidly lose his distinction and be forced from his eminence in public opinion, if it be once made apparent that the community is not advantaged by his services. Thus the position which is occupied is precisely that to which the direction of our text would have naturally led: the man stands amongst his fellows, exactly as we might have expected him to stand, had he guided himself by the maxim, "whosoever will be chief amongst them, let him be their servant."

And if, having traced in instances drawn from the world the identity of the being chief amongst many with the being their minister, we turn to those who have been eminent in religion, shall we not find that they, in like manner, have earned distinction by the services which they have rendered to others? When St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more," he delivered a truth which did not hold good of himself alone, nor in that only sense which was then specially intended, but which is applicable to all Christians in proportion as they imitate the Apostle's devotedness. If a man be very earnest

in his endeavors to lighten the distresses, and scatter the ignorance, of his fellow-men, expending time and fortune on schemes of benevolence, he will become widely known by his philanthropy, and thousands will combine to yield him applause. Yet, undoubtedly, the degree in which he is singled out from others, and confessed their superior, corresponds to the degree in which he has made himself their servant: for may not he, who spends his life in ministering to the necessitous and ignorant, be justly described as the servant of the necessitous and ignorant? As he busies himself with all the offices of tenderness, devoting himself to the soothing the wretched and enlightening the uninstructed, he is practically as much given up to the service of the suffering as though bound to it by the ties of an imposed obligation—the only difference being, that, in place of the coldness and reluctance of an hireling, there is the warmth and alacrity of a most active friendship. Here, then, we have the instance of a man, not merely making himself the servant of others, but the servant of those who have least ability of requiting. Yet it is on this very account that he becomes specially great. If he attached himself to the service of the noble and prosperous, there would rest suspicion on his motives; and we should be inclined to think, whatever the appearance of disinterestedness, that personal advantage was the chief thing proposed. And in proportion as the service wore the aspect of selfishness, would the tribute of applause be diminished: we should be less and less disposed to allow, that, in making himself a servant, he had made himself great, if we had increasing cause to think that his main design was the serving himself. But there is no room for suspicions of this class, when the exhibition is that of a fine Christian philanthropy, leading a man to give his assiduity to the sick-beds of the poor, or the prisons of the criminal. Accordingly, when an individual is manifestly and strongly actuated by this philanthropy, there is an almost universal consent in awarding him the appellation of great: even those who would be amongst the last to imitate are amongst the first to applaud. There is no name, for example, which is held in deeper or more

general veneration than that of Howard; and Howard won his wreath, not in the senate, and not on the field, but amid the darkness of dungeons, and the infection of lazarettoes. He grew great, great in the esteem of his own and of every following generation, through the prodigal devotion of all he had, and all he was, to the service of the wretched. And hence the principle announced in our text receives the strongest possible confirmation: a man has not only made himself a servant, but has gone down into that lowest of all positions which it was predicted that Canaan should occupy—"A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren"—and we find, that, in proportion to the degree of servitude, is the unanimity in confessing him chief: then is he not a fresh and strong witness to the worth of the direction, "He who would be great amongst you, let him be your servant?"

It would, however, be unpardonable, if we were not for a moment to consider our text under another and more obvious point of view. Whatever the practical agreement between Christ's definition of greatness and that adopted by the world, it is evident that our Savior's design was to recommend a virtue which finds no favor with the great mass of men. The expression, "let him be your servant," or "let him be your minister," may be considered as simply enjoining humility, as though it were through abasing himself that a man might look to be exalted. And it is not hard to discover why so great worth should be attached to humility, and why it should be exhibited as conducting finally to distinction. It is a moral warfare in which we are required to engage, and the promised rewards are to be given to those who master themselves. We are placed here on probation, as was Adam in Paradise, and our main trial, like his, is that of submission to the known will of God. And there exists in all of us a tendency to the seeking independence of God, to the acting as though we were wiser than He, and better understood what would minister to happiness. This tendency in whatever way shown—for this will be different with different constitutions—is nothing but the working of pride, so that to counteract it is to acquire humility. And therefore it were scarcely too much

to say, that, in becoming humble, we become all which is demanded by the Gospel; for the mastery of pride, if this be its definition, must include or promote the subjugation of each passion which opposes our entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Where, then, the cause for surprise, if humility be represented as the high-road to greatness? The truly humble man must be, so far as character and achievements are concerned, the truly great man. I call not that man great who has conquered a nation, if he have failed, after all, to conquer himself. True greatness must be moral greatness, greatness of soul, that nobility of spirit which proves of a man that he has measured his duration, and proved himself indestructible. And I recognize this greatness, not necessarily when a man has a world bowing at his footstool, but when he is himself bowing at the footstool of God. The rebel against lawful authority cannot be truly great: the slave of his own passions cannot be truly great: the idolater of his own powers cannot be truly great. And the proud man is this rebel, this slave, this idolater; for pride spurns at the divine dominion, gives vigor to depraved affections, and exaggerates all our powers. What, then, can be more accurate than that pride destroys the chief elements of which a great character is compounded, so that it must be to direct a man in the way to eminence, to prescribe that he be "clothed with humility?" We know that when Christ shall re-appear, it will be to erect that kingdom which his Apostles expected, and to distribute the rewards which have been promised from the first to those "faithful unto death." Who shall gain high rank in this kingdom? on whom shall be bestowed the most glorious of the rewards? We may dare to be sure that the most humble will be the most exalted. They have gone furthest in Christian attainment; for humility is not so much a single element in a righteous man's character, as that which pervades every other, and gives it, at the same time, fixedness and increase. They must be the men of the firmest faith, and the warmest love, and the most soaring hope; the men who have acquired the closest conformity to the image of the Mediator, seeing that this mind is most largely in them which was

also in Christ, who humbled Himself, and, though rich, for our sakes became poor. They, then, must be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Theirs must be the loftiest throne, and theirs the noblest heritage. And I seem to hear nothing more than a declaration, that the recompences of eternity will be dealt out with the very nicest regard to the progress which men have made in godliness, when I hear Christ saying to his disciples, emulous of distinction in his kingdom, "Whosoever will be great amongst you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief amongst you, let him be your servant."

We would now, however, recur to our first view of the maxim of our text, and again urge that he who would lay himself out for eminence, must lay himself out for usefulness. Our argument is, that, however various and inconsistent might be the definitions of greatness, which would be furnished if you asked in different quarters, there is nothing needed but the examination of the cases in which greatness is acknowledged, and fresh evidence will be gained that the chief amongst many must be virtually their minister. May I not, for example, declare with perfect truth of the distinguished body which I am now appointed to address, that they are great through being useful? The servants of the very sailor-boy, who, after long voyaging, marks with rapture the distant light which your carefulness has kindled to guide him on his way; the ministers to the poorest wanderer on those narrow seas which gird about our island, who, without the aids which your pilots supply, would speedily perish on the rock or the quicksand; you certainly, if great as a corporation, are great through the method prescribed by our text. It is not because you may number amongst you the titled of the land; it is not because you may be enrolled under the illustrious alike in battle and in council—and where should victory more fitly preside than over commerce, to whose enterprises it opened land and sea?—it is because you are serviceable to thousands and tens of thousands, serviceable to the mariners whose lives you protect, serviceable to the merchants whose property you guard, serviceable to the empire to all whose intricate avenues you may be said to furnish the clue, that so

lofty a place is given you in public esteem; your usefulness has won for you that greatness which makes it an honorable thing even for the honored to be incorporated with you; so that their presence is the index rather than the cause of your dignity; even as the stars and orders on a man of high achievement do not constitute, but proclaim him the benefactor of a nation. And if indeed it be thus your usefulness to which you owe your greatness, it must be fitting that we impress on you how thoroughly it is your interest, as well as your duty, to spare no pains in perfecting whatsoever may facilitate the navigation of our seas; each lighthouse which diminishes shipwreck is as a fresh diamond in your coronet; and every improved chart is like a new patent of nobility. It is, moreover, worth observing, that the greatness which is thus derived from usefulness, may be augmented or decreased by the meanest of those whom you employ: the ignorance or intemperance of any one of your pilots may bring disgrace upon yourselves, by bringing ruin upon numbers who have been virtually committed to your guardianship; and need we then add, that it would be to cease to be great, and to become even despicable, if ever private interest were suffered to advance incompetence, or shield drunkenness? A high trust would be betrayed, if most rigid inquiries were not instituted into the skill and character of every one whom you empower to take charge of our vessels: but if, after such inquiries, the pilots prove deficient in either knowledge or sobriety, in acquaintance with the waters through which they profess to steer, or in that steadiness which can alone make this acquaintance of use, you indeed are clear; but the pilots, and if any be present, let them hear, and remember, and report to their fellows, the pilots virtually incur the guilt of robbers, by destroying property, and of murderers, by destroying life.

But shall we be exceeding the bounds of our office, if, whilst treating of greatness as resulting from usefulness, and illustrating by the case of a corporation which has grown eminent through its care of our shipping, we point out the duty of making commerce subservient to the spread of Christianity, and the majesty which it would acquire through

being thus employed? Nay, the very name which you bear seems to pledge you to the keeping other interests in view, besides those which more immediately engage your attention. Why have you drawn your designation from the great mystery of the Godhead, if not to give a holy character to the compass and rudder over which you preside, and to express, as it were, your belief that seas should be navigated under the loftiest auspice, and for the most sacred ends? That whatsoever concerns our pilotage is committed to a body, whose title proclaims the doctrine which especially distinguishes revealed religion from natural, might almost be interpreted into a national declaration, that trade should be instrumental to the diffusing the Gospel. But we dare not think that such a declaration has been made good in our practice. There has never indeed been a country so connected as our own with every district of the earth. England has been mistress of the seas; everywhere has her flag floated, and everywhere commanded respect. Yet we have not made commerce tributary to Christianity; we have not practically regarded the sovereignty of the ocean as given us that we might be enabled to disseminate truth. Fleet after fleet has left our shores; the east, and west, and north, and south, have all been steered for by our adventurous ships: but we have swept into our harbors the riches and luxuries of the globe, without leaving in exchange the precious seed of God's word. And for this we may yet expect the divine retribution. Had we thoroughly blended the characters of a Christian and commercial community, the merchants of this country might have been, by God's help, the evangelizers of the earth; and then could no fears have been felt as to the continuance of prosperity; our chieftaincy would have been, in the most splendid sense, the chieftaincy of usefulness, and we may be confident that the Almighty would have given it permanence. Whereas now it is impossible to be free from apprehension, that this country has yet to be called to account for the not having actually, whatever it may have done nominally, consecrated its navigation to the ever-blessed Trinity. When we look on that finest spectacle which our metro-

polis presents—and this spectacle is not its streets, and not its parks, and not its palaces; but the forest of masts which rise for mile upon mile from its noble river,—and when we remember how, with Christianity at the helm of the swarming vessels, the glorious news of redemption might be rapidly borne over the habitable globe; it is not easy to repress all foreboding, to keep from anticipating a time when God may visit upon us the not having used in his cause the vast powers derived from our traffic, and when this nation shall cease to be great amongst kingdoms, through having failed to be their servant, “ministering the Gospel of God.” At least, let it be remembered by those who have in any way an influence on the commerce of the country, that God has given spiritual blessings to be diffused as well as enjoyed; and that it cannot be in his sight an indifferent thing, whether we keep them to ourselves, or act as stewards and communicate to others. Thousands on every side are perishing, according to the Scriptural expression, “for lack of knowledge:” what then shall be said of those, who, with the Bible in their hands, and with unrivalled facilities for the diffusion, take no pains to “hold forth the word of life,” if not that they are virtually as guilty as though a lighthouse had been given into their charge, and then, on some tremendous night, when sea and sky mingled in fierce confusion, they had neglected to kindle the flame, and thus left a navy to be broken into shreds?

But we would now turn for a few moments, in conclusion, to that touching reference to his own case by which Christ illustrates the rule which we have been engaged in examining. “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” Who did not feel, whilst we were gathering illustrations from warriors, and statesmen, and philosophers, and philanthropists, that we might have gone to a higher source, and have given one example, including, yet immeasurably surpassing, every other? It is true that the most eminent amongst men are their servants; for eminence results from usefulness, and usefulness from the dedication of energies to the service of others. But where is there an instance of this dedication of energies, which can

for a moment be compared with that presented by the history of Jesus? How true, and how affecting, was the language which He used, when his disciples were contending as to who should be reckoned greatest, “Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.” It was for the very meanest, as well as for the noblest of the children of men, that the Redeemer engaged in that stern work which could be accomplished only through sorrow and death. Which of us is there who can say that this Redeemer did not perform on his behalf the most servile of offices, stooping to every kind of indignity, enduring every form of hardship, and undertaking every species of toil? But if Christ thus made Himself servant to the human race, it is this very fact which is to draw to Him finally universal homage. Had He not been their servant, He could not have been their Redeemer; and, if not their Redeemer, then at his name would not every knee have bowed, “of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” Thus He illustrates his own precept: He became great through redeeming; but since He redeemed through making Himself the minister to a lost world, He became great through becoming a servant. Can I then need other proof of the worth of the direction furnished by our text? I “consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself;” and I find that the office which He undertook was one of humiliation, an office which can be no better defined, whatever its awfulness and arduousness, than as that of a servant; for it was an office of unbounded toil that a burdened world might be lightened, and of continued suffering that a stricken world might have peace. And when I further observe that all which is most sublime in exaltation was awarded to “the man Christ Jesus,” in recompense of his discharging this office, do I not learn, that if I would stand high in his kingdom, I must imitate Him in lowliness, and in devotion to the interests of all classes of my fellow-men?

There can then be no dispute as to the secret of true greatness: it only remains, that, having the rule, we adopt it in our practice. Earthly greatness, in the or-

dinary sense, is attainable but by few : heavenly is within reach of all, who, as the servants of God, make themselves the servants of man. And a day is approaching when the important question will be, not whether we have stood high in the present world, but whether we have prepared ourselves for the next. The voyage of life is drawing rapidly to a close ; and on that shore, to which all are hastening, must the illustrious stand with the mean, the conqueror with the conquered, the wise with the illiterate, to be "judged according to their works." It is our own fault, if the voyage terminate disastrously. What ! is there no beacon, lit up for those who toss on darkened waters ? is there no pilot to steer the laboring vessel ? is there no anchor to hold her fast amid the drivings of the

storm ? Christ hath come " a light to lighten the Gentiles ;" and his cross, like a moral pharos, directs to immortality. There hath descended the promised Comforter, to guide the wandering to everlasting rest. There is provision in the Gospel for a hope which "maketh not ashamed," "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast."

Then we have but to use the means, and appropriate the blessings, proffered by the Bible, and when the last tempest beats on this creation, and the proud and the sensual and the selfish go down in one wild wreck, we shall be found in "the haven where we would be;" on that "sea of glass like unto crystal," which St. John saw spreading before the throne of God and of the Lamb

S E R M O N I I .

CHRISTIANITY THE GUARDIAN OF HUMAN LIFE.

"The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it."—ECCLESIASTES VII. 12.

It will readily be admitted, that we interpret this passage consistently with the other writings of Solomon, if we understand by knowledge, knowledge of God, and by wisdom, "the wisdom that is from above." It will also be allowed, that we do not propose any strained application of the text, if we understand by knowledge and wisdom what those terms represent under the Christian dispensation, as distinguished from that beneath which Solomon lived. If these preliminaries be conceded, the text appears specially applicable to the present occasion. For it may be said

to claim, as one great characteristic of the Christian religion, the being the giver or guardian of human life : what then can be more appropriate to the assembling of an illustrious corporation, which, bearing on its banner the great mystery of the Godhead, sets itself to preserve thousands who could scarcely escape death, were it not assiduous in firing the beacon and fixing the buoy ?

Such, then, is the point of view under which we have to display Christianity. Christianity is the dispenser of life to the human body and soul. Let other knowledge vaunt itself on this or that excellency : we claim for "the wisdom that is from above," the giving "life to them that have it."

* Preached before the corporation of Trinity House, on Trinity Monday, 1840.

Now we may unhesitatingly charge upon Heathenism, even if you keep out of sight its debasing effect upon morals, and think of it only as a system of religious ceremonies and observances, the having a direct tendency to the destroying men's lives. It commonly represents the Deity as delighting in the sufferings of his creatures, and therefore seeks to propitiate him through slaughter. It has not been merely amongst the more savage of Pagans, but also amongst those who have advanced far in civilization, that the custom has prevailed of offering human sacrifices. Writers the best qualified by learned research for delivering an opinion, assert that there is no nation mentioned in history whom we cannot reproach with having shed the blood of its citizens, in order to appease the Divinity when he appeared angry, or to rouse him when indolent. The Grecians made great progress in sciences and arts; yet it would seem to have been a rule with each of their states, to sacrifice men before they marched against an enemy. The Romans, who emulated the Grecians in civilization, appear not to have been behind them in the cruelties of their religion; even so late as in the reign of Trajan, men and women were slain at the shrine of some one of their deities. As to the heathenism of less refined states, it would be easy to affix to it a yet bloodier character: nothing, for example, could well exceed the massacres, connected with religious rites, which appear to have been common among the nations of America: the annual sacrifices of the Mexicans required many thousands of victims, and in Peru two hundred children were devoted for the health of the sovereign. What a frightful destruction of life! But Christianity owns only one human sacrifice, and, through that one, death itself was abolished.

But we should vastly underrate the influence of Christianity in saving human life, were we merely to compute from the abolition of the destructive rites of heathenism. The influence has been exerted in indirect modes yet more than in direct. We need hardly tell you that Christianity has proved the great civilizer of nations, heightening the morals, and enlarging the charities of communities, so that, beneath its righte-

ous sceptre, animosities have subsided, and happiness has been increasingly diffused. And whilst it has thus, in the general, polished and compacted society, it has spread, in a hundred ways, a shield over human life. It has gradually substituted mild for sanguinary laws, teaching rulers that the cases must be rare which justify the punishing with death. If it have not yet exterminated war, it has greatly softened its horrors. It has made warriors—who can withhold his admiration?—who never sullied victory by cruelty, who never wantonly caused a tear, who were always as eager to protect the unoffending as able to subdue the opposing, and who never vanquished without studying to make defeat a blessing to the conquered.

And what but Christianity, giving sacredness to human life, ever taught men to erect asylums for the sick and the aged? Hospitals and infirmaries are among the most splendid of the trophies of Christianity. They were never found in heathen times and lands. Monarchs never reared them, though half a world stood ready to execute their bidding. Warriors never planned them, though the carnage which they wrought might have suggested their necessity. Philosophers never demanded them, though the virtue which they praised was but a name without compassion. But there came "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and at his word, the earth was covered with homes for the afflicted.

Add to this the mighty advancements which have been made under the fostering sway of Christianity in every department of science. It matters not what may be the connection between the two; the fact is, that knowledge of every kind has walked side by side with the religion of Christ, as though, in unchaining the human spirit, and pointing it heavenwards, this religion gave enlargement to the mind, and strengthened it for discovery. And how wonderfully, in promoting knowledge, has Christianity preserved life. The study of the body, of its structure and diseases; acquaintance with the properties of minerals and plants; skill in detecting the sources of pain, and applying remedies or assuagements—all this would appear peculiar, in a great degree, to Christian nations; as if there could be only inconsiderable progress in medical science,

whilst a land were not trodden by the alone Physician of the Soul.

And need we point out to such an assembly as the present—themselves the best witnesses—how knowledge of other kinds, cherished by Christianity, has subserved the preservation of life? Witness astronomy, watching the mariner, lest he be bewildered on the waters. Witness chemistry, directing the miner, that he perish not by subterranean fires. Witness geography, with its maps and charts, informing the traveller of dangers, and pointing him to safety. Witness architecture, rearing the lighthouse on rocks, where there seemed no foundation for structures which might brave the wild storm, and thus warning away navies which must otherwise have perished. Witness machinery, providing for the poorest, what once the wealthy alone could obtain, the means of guarding against inclement seasons, and thus preserving health when most rudely threatened. We assert, that for the science, thus continually and powerfully exerted on the saving human life, we are practically indebted, through one cause or another, to the Christian religion. It is science which had made little or no way till this religion gained the ascendancy, which is still comparatively a stranger where this religion has no footing; and if the religion and the science always go hand in hand, we may assume, without entering on lengthened demonstration, that they are virtually connected as cause and effect.

But who, after this hurried survey of the influence of Christianity, can hesitate as to the truth of that assertion of Solomon which is under review. If ever there were an assertion, proof of which seemed to start from history, from every thing above, from every thing around us, it is that which ascribes to Christianity the preserving human life. Yes, Christianity, if we may personify thee at all, we would personify thee as the guardian, the giver of life. Thou hast cut down the groves, and levelled the temples, where a misinformed priesthood slew their fellow-men. Thou hast covered lands with receptacles for the suffering, who must otherwise die for want of succor. Thou hast placed mercy on the judgment-seat; yea, taught it to find a home amid scenes of bloodshed, so that multitudes live, who, without thy

mild sway, would be indiscriminately slaughtered. Thou hast led the way to medicinal springs, and instructed us to arrest the ravages of disease. Thine is the marshalling of the rich troop of stars on the guide-book of the mariner, that he may be safe in his wanderings. Thou hast lit the lamp for the adventurous, as they penetrate the depths of the earth. Thine is the beacon against shipwreck; thine the mechanism for multiplying the necessaries and comforts of life; thine the legislation which takes note of the destitute; thine the philanthropy which leads numbers to be on the watch for the suffering; thine the skill which often restores those in whom life seems extinct. O then, we may well address thee as the preserver of human life, and feel that to thee alone belong the beautiful words, "The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it."

But it were greatly to wrong Christianity as a giver of life, were we to confine our illustrations to the bodies, in place of extending them to the souls of men. We have higher evidence than any yet assigned, that Christianity is the only wisdom which will answer the description contained in our text. It may be said of the world, in every period of its history, "The world by wisdom knew not God." And they who have been most successful in scientific inquiry, have not only been often destitute of acquaintance with God, but deprived of it through the very knowledge for which they have labored, and of which they have been proud. There is a tendency in earthly science, to the encouraging that haughtiness of spirit which is directly opposed to religion: they who are distinguished by its attainments, are the most likely to be staggered by the direction of the Apostle, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." But, without considering human wisdom as opposed to the acquisition of heavenly, what is it in itself, as to the power of giving life, when you regard man as an accountable being, and examine how he may stand at the tribunal of God? Will philosophy give any information as to the pardon of sin? Will reason open up any method through which God can be "just and the justifier?" Can natural theology carry us

beyond the discovery of our hopeless condition? Can it suggest a remedy? rather, is not its highest achievement, the proving us exposed to the wrath of the Almighty, the showing us that the attributes of God pledge Him to take vengeance on the sinful, and that the disorganization, too visible throughout this creation, is evidence that the vengeance is already let loose?

Our liability to punishment is discoverable by human wisdom, but the possibility of our escaping it not without heavenly; and hence there is no life-giving power in the former. It is nothing to me, ye men of science, that ye are ready to instruct me in the motions of stars, that ye will take me with you into the laboratories of nature, and there show me the processes of her mysterious chemistry. I dread to look upon the stars; for I feel that I have made their architect mine enemy: I shrink from the wonders of nature; for I know that I have provoked the mighty being who controls them. It is nothing, that ye offer to instruct me in the relations of substances; in the connexion of cause and effect; in the events of other days; in the principles of jurisprudence. I am a dying creature, yet an immortal; sinful, and nevertheless accountable; and if ye cannot tell me how I may prepare for futurity, how meet death with composure, and enter eternity with hope, miserable instructors are ye all! And ye cannot tell me: I must turn to a higher teacher, and seek wisdom at a purer source. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," He hath revealed a method of reconciliation, and offers his Spirit to assist us in the availing ourselves of what He hath done for the world. Sunk by nature in a death of "trespasses and sins," we are both invited and enabled to "walk in newness of life."

For the wisdom which the Holy Ghost continually imparts to such as submit to his influence, is, from first to last, a quickening, vivifying thing. It makes the believer alive, in the sense of being energetic for God and for truth; alive, as feeling himself immortal; alive, as having thrown off the bondage of corruption; alive, as knowing himself "begotten again" "to an inheritance that fadeth not away." "I live," said the great Apostle, "yet not I, but Christ

liveth in me." And life indeed it is, when a man is made "wise unto salvation;" when, having been brought to a consciousness of his state as a rebel against God, he has committed his cause unto Christ, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." It is not life, it deserves not the name, merely to have power of moving to and fro on this earth, beholding the light, and drinking in the air. It may be life to the brute, but not to man—man who is deathless, man who belongs to two worlds; the citizen of immensity, the heir of Eternity. But it is life to spend the few years of earthly pilgrimage in the full hope and certain expectation of everlasting blessedness; to be able to regard sin as a forgiven thing, and death as abolished; to anticipate the future with its glories, the judgment with its terrors, and to know assuredly that He who shall sit upon the throne, and gather all nations before Him, reserves for us a place in those "many mansions" which He reared and opened through his great work of mediation. It is life to live for eternity; it is life to live for God; it is life to have fellowship with what the eye hath not seen and the ear hath not heard. And there is not one amongst us who may not thus live. There is needed only that, renouncing all wisdom of our own, we come unto God to be taught, and we shall receive the gift of the Spirit, that Spirit which is breath to the soul, quickening it from the death of nature, and causing its torpid energies and perverted affections to rise to their due use, and fix on their due end. We cannot find this life-giving wisdom in the schools of the learned; we must not seek it through the workings of reason, nor suppose it taught by the books of philosophy. But if we will come, as little children, to the Bible, and suffer its statements to guide us to the Cross, assuredly we shall acquire what alone should be called knowledge—knowledge, if not of the stars, yet of Him who made the stars; knowledge, if not of what is perishable, of that which is imperishable; knowledge of self; knowledge of sin, of its guilt, and its pardon; we shall know ourselves lost without Christ, but saved, with an everlasting salvation, through his precious blood and perfect righteousness.

And the excellency of this knowledge is, that, having it, you will have life. You cannot have it, except in the heart; for no man knows Christ, who knows Him only with the head. And having this knowledge in the heart, you have renewal of the heart; and with renewal of the heart, forgiveness of sin, and the earnestness of immortality. Are we not now, therefore, able to vindicate in all its extent the assertion of our text? In the former part of the verse, the wise man had allowed that "wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence." Money is a defence to the man of wealth; it shields him against a hundred evils which beat upon the poor. Wisdom is a defence to the man of knowledge; in a vast variety of circumstances, he is on a vantage ground as to others who possess not his attainments. But "riches profit not in the day of wrath," and "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Where will be the rich man's defence, when he shall be parted from the gold which has been to him as an idol? where the wise man's, when the last conflagration shall unfold every object which he has delighted to study? But they, whose treasure has been above,—they, who have counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,"—they shall have a defence, a sure defence, when the rich man is destitute, and the wise man speechless. They have chosen that which cannot be taken away, and which indeed is then only fully possessed, when every thing else departs from human hold. "On such the second death hath no power;" they are "children of the resurrection;" "neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels." And as they soar to inherit the kingdom obtained for them by Christ, and thus lay hold on an immortality of joy, through having acquainted themselves with Him, as "the way, the truth, and the life," there may be none to say that "money is a defence, and wisdom is a defence,"—none to say it, in the face of the confounding witness of the elements melting with fervent heat, and of the shrinking away of those who had been "wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight;" but the whole company of the redeemed shall be joined by the thousand times ten thousand

of the celestial host, in confessing and publishing that the excellency of knowledge is, "that wisdom," Christian wisdom, "giveth life to them that have it."

And assuredly, as we hinted in commencing our discourse, the point of view under which we have thus endeavored to place Christianity, is one most appropriate to the present occasion. The Corporation, before which I have the honor to speak, has grown great by acting upon Christian principles, and thereby becoming pre-eminently the guardian of human life. If it derive its name from that prime mystery of our faith, the full revelation of which was reserved for Christian times, it may be said to derive its object from that description of his mission, which our blessed Savior gave, when He declared to his disciples, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." How many a weeping widow would there be, who is now a happy wife; how many a desolate orphan, how many a childless parent; had you not consecrated science to the noblest of purposes,—had you not, with as much industry as skill, fathomed the seas which beat against our shores, hung the firmament with stars in the darkest night, and traced a path where even time leaves no furrow. I regard such a Corporation as emphatically an illustration of the truth, that Christianity is a life-giving thing. Ye cannot, indeed, labor at preserving life, without laboring also at preserving property. But it has been, it is, life, which ye specially aim to protect: the poor sailor-boy has a dignity in your eyes, because made in God's image, and redeemed by Christ's blood; for his sake ye are ready to lavish treasure and toil; and if ye enrol yourselves under one whose arm has launched resistlessly the thunder-bolt of war, it is that you may give the most affecting of proofs, that the heart to care for the mean may be found with the hand to crush the mighty.

And if it be thus your splendid office, to prove of Christianity that "it giveth life to them that have it," may we not justly exhort you to the using all diligence, that the office may be discharged with greater and greater fidelity? Ye assemble not annually in the house of that God, whom, by your very name, ye profess to honor as "Father, Son, and

Holy Ghost," to commemorate your achievements, and hear your praises. Ye rather assemble to be reminded of your duties, to stand, as it were, once more round the altar of the Lord, and to devote yourselves, by a fresh vow, to your magnificent calling. I could imagine the vow heard by the genius of the storm, causing him to feel as though his prey were snatched from him. The sound goes forth upon the waters,—if it cannot speak them, like the voice of Christ Himself, into stillness, it emulates that voice in bidding those who traverse them, "Be of good cheer."

Yes, I do regard you as gathered for the lofty purpose of consecrating yourselves anew to the guardianship of life. And it gives a majestic aspect to this our assembling, to consider it designed for the throwing fresh ardency into a conflict with death. Followers of Him, who could describe Himself as "the Resurrection and the Life," of whom it was emphatically said, that He "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel;" ye meet to resolve that the grave shall not conquer without a struggle; that, if thousands must yet go down with the waves for their winding-sheet, thousands more, though environed by peril, shall escape safe to shore, warned by your beacons, guided by your charts, and steered by your pilots. Surely it can hardly be that the vow will be made by any insincerely, or that it will not be acted upon fervently. If there be the sunken rock, which has not hitherto been sufficiently marked; the channel, whose intricacies have not been industriously explored; the sandbank, whose position has not been carefully defined; the pilot, whose sobriety and knowledge have not been thoroughly ascertained; ye will go hence to improve and perfect the arrangements which have already done so much to vindicate for Christianity the high praise of preserving human life. In some respects ye have more power than in others; but in all ye have done enough to warrant the expectation, that, ere long, there will be scarcely a deficiency to supply. Rocks, indeed, and shoals, and quicksands, require not your constant vigilance: once accurately defined, you have done your part in directing how to shun them. But pilots demand incessant attention: you autho-

rize them as guardians of property and life: you pledge yourselves to the world for their competence; alas, what a blot were it on your glorious escutcheon, if, though no carelessness can secure you against faithless servants, carelessness should admit those whose unworthiness might have been known! It is like admitting into the priesthood a man whose unfitness a strict scrutiny would have detected: the pilot who cannot steer the laboring ship, like the pastor who cannot guide the wandering soul, is risking men's eternity; the one may cut off opportunities of repentance, as the other may fail to impress its necessity; both, therefore, may work an everlasting injury; and surely, in regard of both, they who might have prevented the injury, are not clear of its commission.

There remains nothing but that we tell you, with all simplicity and affection, that, in proportion as ye are yourselves fraught with the wisdom which gives life, will ye be fitted for the faithful performance of duties which, dictated by Christianity, throw over it a lustre, and establish its excellency. For never let it be thought that any trust can be as well discharged without as with personal religion. To receive into the heart "the wisdom which is from above," is to fit ourselves for the tasks assigned us below. Let me borrow an illustration from an English nobleman, whose son had objected that no apparent good followed the rite of Confirmation, that there was no visible difference between those who submitted to, and those who neglected, so sacred an ordinance. "Tell me," said the father, "what difference your eye can detect between two needles, one of which has received an electric shock, whilst the other has not? And yet the one has hidden virtues, which occasion will show, of which the other has none. The electric shock has rendered the one needle a magnet, which, duly balanced, will enable man to find his way across the trackless ocean. As this needle, so may that soul be, which has received the electric shock of the Holy Ghost: on the ocean of a sinful world, it shall point wanderers to the haven of everlasting rest."

I borrow this illustration, and dare assert, that if the eye cannot scan the difference, yet will they who open the

heart to the religion of Jesus, be the needle which has received the electric shock, as compared with others who know that religion only in name. They will be emphatically givers of life, as though, like the needle, they were endowed with new properties, and men might steer by them in the darkest night and on the roughest waters. Feeling that they have drawn life, eternal life, from Christ, they will burn with desire to lead others to the Savior, and to prove his Gospel, in every sense, the chart and charter of the world. And therefore do we know, that, in exhorting each to be watchful, that he make not shipwreck of the soul, we take the best means of urging upon each, that, in his station and place, he be more assiduous than ever in perfecting arrangements for preserving human life. Our exhortation, then, is, that ye prepare to "ap-

pear before the judgment-seat of Christ," lest, having reared the lighthouse, ye be yourselves dashed against the rocks; having furnished the pilot, ye be driven with no compass into eternity, that ocean unfathomable, and without a shore. Terrible will be the hurricane, when, in the midst of dissolving elements, of falling worlds, the Son of man shall appear as Judge of quick and dead. Then shall many a noble ship, freighted with reason, and talent, and glorious and beautiful things, be broken into shreds. Then shall many a bark founder which had floated gracefully along, with every flag flowing as though life had been a holiday. And the only vessels which shall ride out the storm, shall be those which, having made the Bible their map, and Christ their light, steered boldly for a new world, in place of coasting the old.

S E R M O N I I I . *

THE LEAST OF SERVICE TO THE GREATEST.

* And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.—1 CORINTHIANS XII. 21.

The Corinthian Church, here addressed by St. Paul, was unhappily torn by many schisms and dissensions. There had been a rich distribution amongst its members, of the various miraculous endowments which accompanied, or resulted from, the effusion of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost; but these gifts, in place of being used for purposes of edification, were ostentatiously displayed, and made occasions of bitterness and contention.

To show the wrongness and unreasonableness of this state of things, St. Paul drew an illustration from the human body, in which a great variety of members and organs combined to the producing symmetry and strength. It was evident that the parts of this curious and admirable structure, had very different offices; but it was equally evident, that no part could be dispensed with without injury to the rest. So dependent were the several members the one on the other, the weakest on the strongest, the strongest on the weakest, that none

* Preached before the Corporation of Trinity House, on Trinity Monday, 1842.

could be regarded as unimportant, however mean the functions which it had to discharge. This was parallel, the Apostle argued, to the case of the Christian Church or community. The Church was composed of many members, differing in office and gifts. Some of these members, as in the human body, were comparatively without honor, but none without use. Even the meanest had its appropriate functions, functions as essential to the general well-being as those of the more dignified. The men who fill subordinate stations in the Church, or in society, can no more be spared than those who fill the higher: and if the latter look down on them with contempt, it is as absurd as if the finer organs of the body were to declare themselves independent on the less honored.

This is the general idea suggested by the figurative language of our text; and we think, that in following out and illustrating this idea, we can hardly fail to find material of discourse especially adapted to the present audience and occasion.

Now it is beautiful to observe, what close links there are between the several classes in a community, and how the breaking of any one would go far towards dislocating the whole social system. It is the saying of Solomon, "The king himself is served by the field;" and the saying points out how the throne is connected with the soil, how the illustrious occupant of the one depends on the tiller of the other. It is literally from the field that all the arts and comforts of civilized life spring. Man's first toil is to wring subsistence from the earth: till this is secured, he can do nothing towards providing what is not absolutely indispensable to existence. And though God has mercifully ordered that the earth should yield its productions with glorious prodigality, and that, therefore, out of a teeming population, only few need give themselves to agriculture—the labor of one procuring food for numbers, and thus leaving numbers at liberty to give themselves to other callings and pursuits—it is too evident to need proof, however easily it may be overlooked, that it is actually the soil which furnishes, and actually the tiller of the soil who extracts, the material of which is composed the whole fabric of a thriving community.

When you look on such a community, on its nobles rich in ancestral honors and rights, on its merchants covering the ocean with their fleets, on its preachers devoting themselves to the diffusion of Christianity, on its men of science advancing daily the boundaries of knowledge, on its artificers producing a thousand luxuries and elegancies, you may, perhaps, think little of the peasantry who are truly the upholders of the splendid combination, and the mainspring which actuates its mighty rotations. Yet you have only to suppose the peasantry ceasing from their labors—the tillers of the field, that is, refusing, or unable, to perform any longer their part in the general economy—and there would be an almost immediate arrest on the businesses and enjoyments of the stirring community; every wheel would be clogged, every impulse suspended; so that, from the throne downwards, through every grade and division of society, there would be no aspect but of panic, and no thought but of warding off starvation.

And if this be incontrovertible, who can fail to recognize a mutual dependence amongst the ranks of a community, causing such a blending and interweaving of the several interests, that, if the poor need the rich, the rich stand, at least equally, in need of the poor? There cannot be a more pitiable spectacle than that of a haughty individual, who looks superciliously on the occupants of lower stations than his own. We call it a pitiable spectacle, because manifesting thorough ignorance in regard of the links in the social chain, and of the contributions which the inferior classes make to the dignities of the higher. A land, covered with palaces, but without cottages—what would it be but a land covered with costly sepulchres? The sumptuousness of the palace was produced, and is sustained, through the honest industry which may be found in the cottage; and the effectual way of bringing down the fine structure, or turning it into a mausoleum for its inmates, would be to paralyze the activities of that humble race of men whose whole life is one round of labor and drudgery. Are we not, then, warranted in defining as a pitiable spectacle, that of a man who despises his inferiors, looking on them with contempt, as though he owed them nothing, whereas

they are in truth his benefactors and upholders? Would it not be a just rebuke of his arrogance, to set before him the closeness of his association with the meanest of his countrymen, to require him to trace the production and progress of that wealth, or that rank, which ministers to his pride, till he found it originating in the bone and muscle of the objects of his scorn?

Yes, we think, that in showing men, as we easily may, that society is so constituted, that its upper classes derive their advantages through the industry of the lower, so that a derangement would be nowhere so fatal as amongst those who bear the least honored offices, we effectually expose the preposterousness of that pride which would put a slight on the poor and ignoble. For what is to be said of any conceited assumption of independence, of any contempt of those who fill subordinate places, when it can be proved as true in the body politic as in the body natural, that "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you?"

But let us consider this great fact under a somewhat more practical point of view—at least, under one that will more forcibly commend itself to a Christian assembly. It is easy to suppose, though there may never have occurred, the ease of a community from which was banished every thing like want, so that, though gradations of rank might still exist, there should be every where sufficiency, and perhaps even abundance. This is a state of things for which many philanthropists ardently long, and the arriving at which they would count the arriving at the very perfection of the social system. They look with melancholy feelings on the unequal distribution of temporal advantages; and commiserating the destitution of thousands in an over-peopled land, think that it would be vastly for the general good, if there could be in every family independence and plenty. And thus would they desire to take away from amongst us the actually destitute, reckoning that it would be nothing less than the mighty regeneration of a country, to make its every inhabitant independent on the benevolence of every other.

But, for our own part, we know not

how to join in this longing for what might be called universal affluence. We have always regarded these words of the Bible, "the poor shall never cease out of the land," as announcing one of those wise and beneficent arrangements of Providence which so eminently distinguish the moral government of the world. And if you could find us the land, in respect of which these words were no longer verified, the land out of which the poor had ceased, so that his own resources were adequate to the wants of every inhabitant, it would not be the sunshine in its sky, nor the verdure on its fields, which could persuade us of the desirableness of dwelling in that land. We speak now, of course, of the moral advantages which a country might present, of its desirableness as a residence for those in quest of spiritual improvement; and we say, that the country in which it would be hardest to make progress in genuine piety, would be that from which the poor had altogether ceased, in whose habitations none were to be found requiring the succors of Christian benevolence. One of the most fatal, and, at the same time, most common, of the tendencies of our nature, is the tendency to selfishness. The forgetting others and the caring only for ourselves—we can scarcely help being aware that there is nothing to which we are more prone than to this; so that all our watchfulness is required to prevent our settling into narrow-hearted things, with no joy but in our own advancement, and no sorrow but in our own trouble. And who can fail to see that the having amongst us objects which continually appeal to our compassions, the being placed in such circumstances that the spectacle of suffering is frequently forced on our observation, and the tale of distress on our attention, is wonderfully adapted to the counteracting that tendency to which we have referred? At least, if in spite of the multiplied occasions on which we now come in contact with objects demanding our sympathy and soliciting our succor, we find it intensely difficult to keep the affections from centering on ourselves, must we not believe that the difficulty would be greatly enhanced, were the afflicted and destitute removed from amongst us, so that there should be none to excite pity, and none to need assistance? And why,

then, should we hesitate to pronounce the poor,—those who cannot sustain themselves by their own industry, but whom one cause or another makes dependent on the wealthy,—the blessings and benefactors of a community?

We can imagine such a revolution in the circumstances of this country, that many of its public structures might no longer be required for the purposes to which they were originally devoted. The spacious receptacles into which commerce brings the treasures of the globe might be closed; for the enterprise and capital of our merchants might be exhausted, or wholly overborne by foreign competition. There might no longer be men of science amongst us, to throng buildings reared in honor of learning and for the advancement of knowledge. The proud edifices might crumble, within which are gathered trophies of victory and implements of war; for we might have descended from our lofty position, and have settled into the sullenness of a subjugated province. But we might be a virtuous and a Christian people, though our fleets no longer swept every sea, and we were no longer conspicuous, whether by literary taste or martial prowess. It would not be the downfall of our vast warehouses, of our splendid museums, or of our towering arsenals, which could fill us with apprehensions for the spiritual well-being of our people. The structures whose removal, because they were no longer requisite, would seem to us most ominous to the vital Christianity of the nation—always excepting our churches, in regard of which the supposition is impossible—are our hospitals, infirmaries, and almshouses, structures consecrated to the reception of the indigent and afflicted, and the closing of which would indicate that there was no longer much sphere for the exercise of philanthropy. Whilst you swept away buildings which belong to us as a rich, intelligent, and powerful people, we should feel, that though there might be much in the removal that was humiliating, there might be much also that was profitable; and that the likelihood was far from inconsiderable, that the national Christianity would eventually be strengthened through changes so mortifying to the national pride. But when you came to remove structures reared for the shelter of the miserable,

we should feel the removal an indication that henceforward there would be little appeal to the sympathies of the heart; and we could therefore anticipate the rapid growth of that selfishness which is utterly opposed to the religion of Christ, which marks out a people as morally worthless, whatever their wealth, their science, and their power.

Thus do we unhesitatingly regard the halt, the maimed, and the blind, the widow in her penury, and the orphan in his loneliness, as virtually amongst the most useful members of our community, keeping that community from hardening into a heartless mass, and preserving in healthful play its sympathies and sensibilities. It may be perfectly true, that the indigent cannot do without the benevolent; but it is equally true, that the benevolent cannot do without the indigent. And we pray you to observe, that whensoever you give ear to a tale of distress, and the heart melts at the cry of suffering, and you contribute, according to your ability, to the relief of the suppliant, you receive as well as confer benefit; the afflicted being whom you succor, and thereby make greatly your debtor, keeps, by his appeal, the charities of your nature from growing stagnant, and thus may be said to requite the obligation. Oh, let no Christian think that he could safely dispense with the presence and pleadings of the poor and the sorrowful! Place him out of the sight of their woe, and the reach of their cry, and we can answer for it that he would make slower progress than ever in the graces of the Gospel, and that his moral condition would be daily less hopeful. And thus, when you view men with reference to their spiritual interests, considering them as combined by God into societies that they may have means and opportunities for exercising the virtues and securing the rewards of Christianity, we know not how you can hesitate to set side by side the possessor of every advantage and another who is bankrupt even in hope, him who is at the summit and him who is at the bottom of human condition, and to declare, in the expressive language of our text, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

This general argument might, if time permitted, be broken into detail. We might show you by various exemplifications, how applicable is the principle of our text in regard of the several classes of society. It were easy to enlarge on the utter uselessness of orders or individuals, who may be likened to the more honorable members of the body, were there not other orders or individuals, who may, with equal fitness, be likened to the less honorable. Of what avail, for example, would be the courage and skill of a general without troops to obey his commands?—of what the ingenuity of the engineer, were there no laborers to employ his inventions?—of what the wisdom of the legislator, without functionaries to carry his measures into force? In these, and a thousand like instances, if it be necessary for the hand and the feet that they be directed by the eye and the head, the eye and the head would be of no use if unconnected with the hand and the feet. The clergyman, again, is a case in point. If those ordained to minister in the congregation may, from the importance of their office, be likened to the eye or the head in the body, they depend greatly on the very lowest of the people, as they prosecute their honorable and difficult employment. For if, as we endeavored to show you, the actual presence of suffering be the great antagonist to that general selfishness which would be fatal to the growth of Christianity, the poor of his flock must be a clergyman's best auxiliaries, seeing that they help to keep the rest from that moral hardness which would make them impervious to his most earnest remonstrance. Thus, we are met on every side by illustrations of the principle involved in the text, that the least is of service to the greatest. It is a principle to be carefully remembered and upheld. I cannot confine to the upper classes of society the power of being dignified, and of filling a vastly-important part in the general economy. It is no want of loyalty, neither is it forgetfulness of what a country owes to its nobles, if, after surveying the owners of a palace, and marking the diligence with which they give themselves to the lofty functions entailed by their grandeur, I pass to one of the meanest of our cottages, and, finding its inmates prosecuting daily

toils with industry, and bearing daily privations with patience, feel that in all which is inherently great and essentially good, the inhabitants of the hovel are on a level with those of the magnificent ancestral abode. Poverty will never degrade a man; nothing but vice will do that. Poverty will never disable a man for usefulness, seeing that it can but change his office in the body, and there is no office unimportant to the general health. Why, then, are not our poor, our honest, hard-working, and moral poor, to lift up their heads in society, in all the consciousness of having an honorable part to perform, and in all the satisfaction of feeling that they perform it faithfully and effectually?

And I dwell on this usefulness, this indispensableness, of the lower classes to the higher, because nowhere is it more practically exhibited and recognized than by that noble Corporation which I am now permitted to address. The rich and the poor, the illustrious and the mean, the scientific and the illiterate, are blended herein; but so blended, that every one is serviceable to every other. If ye have at your head the conqueror of his country's enemies, and the stay of her greatness; if men, who would have been distinguished by their birth, had not such distinction been forgotten in that of their deeds, enrol themselves in your list; if veterans in that service which has given England her supremacy, consecrate their experience to the perfecting your charts; if the astronomer be amongst you, to make the stars your ministers; the engineer, to plant ramparts against the ocean; the architect, to rear the lighthouse in defiance of the tempest; are ye not, nevertheless, dependent on the poor and ignoble? Ye have devoted yourselves to the protection of navigation, that, under your auspices, commerce may go boldly forth, and sweep into our ports the riches of the earth; but of what avail were your pains, if the sailor could not be found to climb the mast, nor the pilot to seize the helm? Surely here again "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

And the finest point of view under which to survey this Corporation, is to regard it as centering its care and

science on the destitute and lowly. It has an eye, an eye from whose glance of fire a world has recoiled; but that eye saith not to the hand, "I have no need of thee:" it anxiously watches the meanest mariner, and is ever on the look out, that he may be warned of his danger. It has a head, a head encircled with surpassing renown; but that head saith not to the feet, "I have no need of you:" it is occupied with caring for the poor cabin-boy, as recognizing his usefulness, and his claim to be remembered in his wanderings on the deep. For not only does this Corporation labor at the protection of the seaman, by lighting up the rocks which environ our island, and furnishing our ships with skilful pilots; it devotes much of its revenue to purposes of charity, to the maintenance of such structures for the aged and infirm as I have ventured to call bulwarks against the worst evils that can fall on a land. And the most gratifying thing in this annual celebration, is not the pomp in which you descend yonder noble river, not the stateliness of ancient custom, not even the thrilling welcome with which thousands meet a venerated chieftain; it is rather the air of comfort, and of happiness, which distinguishes the inmates of your almshouses, the quiet thankfulness with which they come forward, testifying that those who employed them in their strength succor and defend them in their decline.

And if the very structure of this Corporation thus make it furnish not only an illustration of the fact asserted in our text, but an example of that regard for inferior members which should be shown by the higher, we are bound to add that the honor hereby done to an inferior, should urge to faithfulness and diligence in duty. The hands and the feet should be unwearied in labor, when the eye and the head are thus unwearied in care. The pilots, for example, on whom so much depends, who have often property in their keeping, the loss of which would be the bankruptcy of cities, and lives whose destruction would fill a country with wailing, ought they not to feel that sobriety and fidelity, duties in every case, are doubly so in theirs, lest they fail in a trust received from so high an authority? Ignorant or drunken pilots are virtually as much the enemies of society as robbers and assassins: for are

they not hands which would pluck out the eye, and feet which would run the head against the rocks? But ignorant or drunken pilots, who have received their commission from the Trinity Board, whether they have imposed on that Board at first, or fallen afterwards into bad habits, are as robbers and assassins with every possible aggravation,—hands which would pluck out the eye when wakeful for their good, feet which would run the head against the rocks when occupied with kind thoughts for their safety and happiness.

We have drawn our illustrations, on the present occasion, from the usefulness of every member of the human body to every other; and we ought not to conclude without observing, that, as a day approaches when the body, with all its curious adaptations and symmetries, must lie down in the dust, no one member being exempt from the general decay, so is a time at hand when the mighty and the weak, the lofty and the low, must alike depart from the scene, so that the place which has known them shall know them no more. But there is to come a judgment according to works, a judgment on the body as well as on the soul. The judgment on the body may be a judgment of its several members, according as they shall have yielded themselves to the service of unrighteousness. Shall not the eye be judged, if it have been lit up with the fires of base passion? Shall not the head be judged, if it have employed itself on "science falsely so called?" Shall not the tongue, if it have given utterance to the scornfulness of the blasphemer, or the voluptuousness of the sensualist? Shall not the hand, if it have held greedily the coveted wealth?

And, in like manner, the judgment on individuals shall take form and measure from their office and position upon earth. The great and illustrious shall be asked, whether they had sought to employ their high prerogatives on promoting God's glory and the kingdom of Christ. The wealthy shall be asked, whether they had regarded themselves as stewards, and used riches on the relief of the miserable and the instruction of the ignorant. The learned shall be asked, whether they had hallowed their science, by rendering it subservient to the making themselves and others "wise

unto salvation." The poor shall be asked, whether they had borne poverty with contentment, and meekly struggled with those difficulties which God had been pleased to weave into their portion. Yea, and all shall be asked, what they have done with the soul, that precious deposit, which, redeemed at the inestimable cost of Christ's blood, may be, and is, flung away by thousands; by conquerors, who conquer all but themselves; scholars, who study every thing but themselves; preachers, who preach to every one but themselves; by multitudes, who care for every thing but the one thing needful, have time except for eternity, and room in the heart except for God.

Oh, that all might remember the strict and solemn account thus eventually to be rendered! The shipwreck of the soul! there is no language for the expressing such catastrophe; seeing that to "lose the soul" is not to be deprived of the soul—this might comparatively be happiness; it is to retain possession of the soul, but the soul laboring under

some awful denunciation: and to lose whilst we keep! there is something terrible in the very contradiction. It is total shipwreck; and yet the stately vessel rides the waters, in place of having foundered; holds fast her gallant trim, in place of being broken into shivers; lost, through being incapable of sinking; doomed to wander for ever on a shoreless sea, driven by a storm which knows no pause, through a night which has no morning.

But as yet this mysterious and fearful doom is not incurred by any amongst us. The soul may still be saved, saved by the old, saved by the young. Only take heed, that, whilst you rear the beacon, and map the channel, that the mariner may be guided to "the haven where he would be," you keep the eye on Christ, "the true light," and follow the directions of that Gospel which gives the soundings of the river of life; and to die shall be but to cast anchor by a happy shore—a new world, which, unlike the old, can neither disappoint nor disappair.

S E R M O N I V .

THE BLESSING IN THE CURSE.†

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—GENESIS III. 19.

You have here a portion of the sentence pronounced upon Adam, because

* Preached before the Corporation of Trinity House, on Trinity Monday, 1344.

† So comprehensive were the thoughts of our great masters in theology, that the following discourse is but the expansion of a single sentence of the admirable Barrow, who says of industry, "We were designed for it in our first happy state, and upon our lapse thence, were further

he had hearkened to his wife, and eaten the forbidden fruit. Sentence had already been passed upon the serpent and upon Eve; the serpent who had beguiled our common mother, and that mother herself, through whose disobedience we

doomed to it, as the sole remedy of our needs and the inconveniences to which we became exposed."

became mortal and miserable. Unto the serpent it was said, that upon his belly he should go, and dust should he eat all the days of his life,—a doom which must have referred rather to Satan, who had assumed the serpent's shape, than to the serpent itself, and which may have been accomplished in the abject condition of that fallen, though yet mighty spirit. Unto the woman it was announced that it should be in much pain and anguish she gave birth to her children—an intimation in which, it may be, there was promise as well as threatening; for Eve had already heard of the seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head; and she might now gather that, through much suffering, there would at last arise a Deliverer. And now must the man stand forward, and take his doom from the lips of his Maker. Amongst all the sentences, there is none which so marks the hateful character of sin, and its devastating power. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." So deadly a thing is evil, which thou hast been instrumental in introducing, that the very soil whereon thou treadest is thereby made barren. No longer shall the earth spontaneously yield thee her fruits; for henceforward thorns and thistles shall be its natural produce. "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life,"—thou must wring a hard subsistence from the reluctant field, in place of gathering an abundance which solicits thine acceptance. And there will be no termination to this toil, until the earth, which has almost refused thee sustenance, shall give thee a grave. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Thou hast been fermed from that ground; its dust has been compounded into thy limbs; and the curse is upon thy body, and upon all the material of which its members have been framed. The dust therefore must mingle with the dust,—“dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.”

Such was the sentence on our offending father, and on ourselves as having offended and fallen in him. And we need not tell you how faithfully the sentence has been executed. You know that, with few exceptions, and those, perhaps, more apparent than real, labor—painful and oppressive labor—is the

lot of humankind; and that it is by some species or another of toil that every man gains his sufficiency of food. If you traverse the globe, you find every where, though not always in the same degree, the human race fighting against want, and the great majority of a population struggling with the earth for a miserable pittance. In some places there is greater luxuriance in the soil, in others greater sterility; but nowhere do you find that man eats bread except in the sweat of his face. From pole to pole, amid the snows of perpetual winter, and beneath the blazings of a tropical sun, there is but one cry and one strife,—the cry of millions for the means of subsistence, the strife with a ground on which rests God's curse, and which therefore yields nothing until extorted from its womb. And thus is the history of our race little more than one vast evidence that we are the posterity of one whose disobedience spoiled the earth of its fruitfulness, and who, receiving in himself the sentence of labor, transmitted it, unexhausted and inexhaustible, to all after generations.

Yet if “mercy rejoiced against judgment” in the words uttered to the serpent and the woman, let us not hastily conclude that there was nothing of love in the sentence of which the man was the subject. We rather incline to believe that it was not wholly in anger and righteous severity that God made the cursing of the ground the punishment of Adam. We think that it will not be difficult to show that the Almighty was consulting for the good of his creatures when He thus made labor their inevitable lot. It was indeed in just indignation that He passed a stern sentence, which still rests as a heavy burden on ourselves. But it may have happened that He so shaped that sentence as to make it beneficial as well as punitive, and thus gave cause that we exclaim with David, in reference to this as to every other instance of his chastisement, “I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.”

It will be our endeavor to prove that this is the fact. We shall soon perceive that no subject could be more appropriate to the present occasion; but without anticipating the application, let us examine into the mercy (for the judgment is sufficiently apparent) of that appoint-

ment of God which took much of its fruitfulness from the earth, and made toil the common heritage of man.

Now we need not limit our remarks to the single case of agriculture; for we may safely affirm that there is nothing worth man's attaining which he can attain without labor. It is not merely his bread which he wrings with hardship from the ground,—whatsoever the earth contains of precious and useful can only be obtained through being wrenched from its recesses, and is procured for us by the bone and the sinew of suffering humanity. And where man has not, in strict truth, to live by the sweat of his brow, he may have to live, which is far harder, by the sweat of his brain; intellectual food, even more than bodily, is only to be gathered by dint of unremitting toil. It is, therefore, the very character of the dispensation beneath which we are placed, that all must be laborers; and we may perhaps assume as universally conceded, that idleness is the fruitful parent of every kind of vice. But it follows from this, that the placing it in a man's power to be idle, the supplying him, that is, with the means of subsistence without exacting from him any labor, is simply the exposing him to the greatest possible peril, and the almost ensuring his moral degeneracy. There are, indeed, frequent and noble exceptions to this statement. Many, whose circumstances preclude all necessity of toiling for a livelihood, carve out for themselves paths of honorable industry, becoming the illustrious benefactors of a community through labors which their own wants would never have exacted. Such cases, however, prove nothing against our statement; they are not cases of idleness, but cases in which men, having the power to be idle, have felt the evil of such a state, and voluntarily submitted themselves to the ordinance of labor. The assertion as to the peril of idleness remains untouched; neither is any proof given that it would be safe to entrust the great mass of men with the power of being idle. And this is the single question, when the matter in debate is the mercy of that arrangement which took from the soil its first unbounded fruitfulness. Would the mass of men give themselves to honorable and praiseworthy occupations, if no neces-

sity were laid on them by the wants of their nature?

The question may, in a great degree, be answered by a reference to cases in which the approach is the nearest to the supposed exemption from want. We look at countries in which the soil possesses the greatest fertility,—are their inhabitants the most distinguished by what is laudable and excellent? On the contrary, it may safely be affirmed, that where nature is most prodigal of her bounties, men make least advances in what enobles a kingdom. There are districts of this globe on which the curse of barrenness has fallen so lightly, that they might almost be thought to have retained their original fruitfulness. There is little or no demand on the labors of the husbandman: the mountains and the valleys stand thick with rich produce, and have scarcely asked the mattock or the ploughshare. But the inhabitants of these districts are, for the most part, sunk in the lowest degradation, and are far behind other nations in what is dignified and civilized. No where do you find more of hopeless suffering and abject penury—as though misery increased at the same rate as the means of its alleviation. If you would fix on a people presenting the finest spectacle of greatness, order, and intelligence, you must go to lands where there is a constant struggle for the material of subsistence,—where any approach towards universal idleness would be an approach towards universal destitution. There it is that civilization makes most rapid advances; there you find the most of a well-ordered and well-conditioned population. We wish that we could sketch to you what a change would be introduced into such a country as our own by a repeal of the sentence pronounced upon Adam. Let it be imagined that there was suddenly an end to all demands upon toil, so that our fields yielded, almost spontaneously, whatever was needed for the support of our population. We will not say that the whole social system would be instantly disorganized; for time might be required to overthrow confirmed habits of order and industry. But you cannot doubt that a vast and fatal revolution would be immediately commenced. You cannot doubt, that, among the lower orders especially, who are accustomed only to

the bare necessaries of life, there are hundreds, thousands, who would prefer the bread of idleness to that of labor, whom nothing but the necessity of driving from their doors the stern aspect of famine keeps fast to any employment, and who would quickly, if there were the supposed inundation of plenty, cease from occupation and run riot in the abundance. And there would be no power in the upper classes of making head against the lawlessness and insubordination which would thus pervade all the lower, even if they caught nothing of the infection, but were themselves as desirous as before of carrying forward the engagements of industry. The moment that the poorer ranks had resolved on being idle, there would be an arrest on all the business of the higher; for such are the links in the social combination, that, in putting one part out of joint, you un hinge the whole system. And when you add the almost certainty, that the enervating effects of this change of comparative sterility for unbounded fruitfulness would extend themselves to every class which is required to labor, you cannot but allow, that there would be quickly a cessation of all commerce, and an end to all enterprize, and that the nation would soon present the inglorious spectacle of a mere stagnant humanity, ruffled only by the worst passions of our nature. We can imagine no other condition,—and we do not believe it would be long ere it were reached,—than one in which all that is noble in legislature, and pure in theology, and lofty in morals, and splendid in intellect, and bold in enterprize, would be buried in one common grave. But if there be any truth in this description of the consequences of impregnating the soil of a land with the lost fertility of Paradise, will you not confess that it was with a distinct knowledge and forethought of what would suit a fallen race, that the Almighty pronounced the edict of barrenness? Oh, if ever you are tempted to repine that toil has been made the heritage of man, and that the great bulk of our species must wring from the earth a scant and precarious subsistence, we conjure you to observe how the well-being, perhaps almost the existence, of a community is dependent on the circulation through all its classes of a vigorous industry, and how again, that indus-

try is dependent on the sterility of the soil,—and then, when you see that the destroying the necessity for labor, by causing the ground to yield superfluity without toil, would be the destroying of all that is venerable, and healthful, and dignified, and the reducing a people to the lowest level of mere animal being, you will be forced to allow, that, however harsh in sound, there was the fullest mercy, as well as the richest wisdom in the appointment, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

But are there any intimations in Scripture, that the sentence upon Adam was designed to breathe mercy as well as judgment? We believe that, so soon as man fell, notices were graciously given of a deliverance to be effected in the fulness of time. It is hardly to be supposed that Adam would be left ignorant of what it so much concerned him to know; and the early institution of sacrifice seems sufficient to prove that he was taught a religion adapted to his circumstances. And Lamech, on naming his son Noah, which signifies “rest,” exclaimed, “This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.” He seems, that is, to have been made aware of the respects in which his son Noah would typify the Christ, taught that the curse upon the ground was but temporary, imposed for wise ends, until the final manifestation of a Redeemer, under whose sceptre the desert should rejoice and “blossom as a rose.” But if so much were revealed to Lamech, it cannot be an overbold supposition that the same information was imparted to Adam. Thus may our first parent, compelled to till an earth on which rested the curse of its Creator, have known that there was blessing in store; and that, though he and his children must dig the ground in the sweat of their face, there would fall on it a sweat like great drops of blood, having virtue to remove the oppressive malediction. It must have been bitter to him to hear of the thorn and the thistle; but he may have learnt how thorns would be woven into a crown, and placed round the forehead of One who should be as the lost tree of life to a dying creation. The curse upon the ground may have been regarded by

him as a perpetual memorial of the fatal transgression and the promised salvation; reminding him of the sterility of his own heart, and the toil it would cost the Redeemer to reclaim that heart, and make it bring forth the fruits of righteousness; telling him, whilst pursuing his daily task, what internal husbandry was needful, and whose arm alone could break up the fallow ground—and thus Adam may have been comforted, as Lamech was comforted, by the Noah who was to bring rest to wearied humanity: and it may have been in hope as well as in contrition, in thankfulness as well as in sorrow, that he carried with him this sentence in his banishment from Paradise, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

We have not yet mentioned, though it is well worth the remark, that, had the earth yielded her fruit so abundantly as to leave no place for suffering and destitution, there would have been comparatively no call on man’s sympathies, but selfishness would have reigned with unlimited despotism. We must become as angels before we can be fitted to live in a world in which there is no want. Poverty and wretchedness serve to keep alive the best charities of our nature; and it were better for us, in a moral point of view, to live always in a hospital, or amid the ravages of famine, than in a luxuriant land, where there were none to ask pity, and none to need succor. Here is one great end which we may believe to have been subserved by the substitution of sterility for fruitfulness in the soil. The poor are in the land, and cannot cease out of the land whilst the earth remains under the original curse. And thus, by presenting perpetual occasions for the exercise of brotherly love, God has done the utmost to provide against that induration of heart, that contraction of feeling, and that centering of all one’s thoughts in one’s self, which are amongst the worst symptoms of moral degeneracy, and the worst earnest of final condemnation. The ordinance that in the sweat of his face must man eat bread, secures a continual succession of objects of sympathy, leaving selfishness without excuse, inasmuch as those who suffer least from the curse are so-

licitated on all sides to show compassion to those who suffer more.

And here it should be observed, in strict connexion with our subject of discourse, that there is falseness in the very common opinion which would make labor altogether the result of sin, as though, if men had never fallen, they would have had no need of industry. It is true, that whatsoever there be of painful in labor, should be ascribed to sin, and would not have existed had the world continued innocent. But labor itself was the ordinance of God whilst man was in Paradise. That beautiful garden, over which there had yet passed no blight, required to be dressed, and Adam was directed to till and to keep it. No doubt the soil, not yet stricken by the curse of its Maker, would not ask the sweat of man’s face before it yielded him bread; but neither was the corn to spring spontaneously forth; it demanded culture, and so forbade idleness. The curse provoked by disobedience was not the curse of labor, but the curse of painful labor; “in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” It is not, then, in his fallen state alone, that industry is required of man; it may more properly be said to be the law imposed upon every creature; so that of whatsoever God hath made in earth, sea, and air, He hath made nothing to be idle. Employment in some shape or another would seem appointed to every living thing; the highest of Heaven’s angels has his duties to fulfil, and the meanest of earth’s insects must be busy or perish. Even the inanimate creation, as some of the old Fathers have observed, may be said to preach to us against idleness, and to represent to us its ruinous effects. “All nature is upheld in its being, order, and state, by constant agitation;” it is the running water which keeps fresh, the air fanned by winds which is wholesome, the metal that is in use which does not rust. And, therefore, according to the whole drift of our discourse, though the amount and character of the labor required from man have been greatly changed through the entrance of sin, there can be no question that there was more of blessing than of curse in the edict which took the first fruitfulness from the ground. There has been hence imposed upon the world a general

necessity for industry; and in a world corrupted by sin, it could not, we argue, have safely been left optional with men whether or not they would work; their own welfare demanded that industry should be indispensable to the warding off starvation. We find, then, in the appointment announced by our text, extraordinary evidence of the wisdom and goodness of God: man's due place in creation was only to be preserved through the surrounding with difficulties the preservation of life; and the readiest way of sinking him to the level of the brute, would have been the supplying his wants in the same way as those of the brute are supplied. Nor are other considerations wanting which lead to the same conclusion. It is industry alone which will preserve any thing like a healthful contentment in our spirits; the unemployed man is always dissatisfied and restless; time is a burden: after all, he is forced to be industrious, industrious in squandering what he will live to regret his not improving. Indeed, he labors most who labors least: the man who seeks only ease should seek it through labor; for "sloth, which hateth labor and trouble, doth by hating, incur them." God has so constituted us, that the being occupied dissipates dull humors from the mind, keeps the various faculties in vigorous play, and, even if it exhaust us, brings sweet and undisturbed repose. Industry, moreover, is ordinarily followed by rewards; the industrious are seldom baffled in their pursuits; they are generally the men who attain the greatest measure of what passes as desirable; and when wealth or honor flows in upon a man, through God's blessing on his industry, it is incomparably sweeter to him than if he had derived it from another—the treasure which himself hath acquired, is vastly more precious than if ancestors had bequeathed it; the nobility achieved by his own actions, immeasurably more gratifying, than if it had descended through a long line of peers.

And whilst so much may be said on the advantages of industry—on the blessing which is hidden in the curse of our text—there are not wanting examples and patterns to urge to the culture of this virtue, the parent, as we might call it, of every other, or, indeed, a main ingredient in every other. Turn

where you will, and all is industry: look into the histories of the illustrious, and all is industry. That God blessed man in cursing the ground, this seems breathed from things animate and inanimate, from the highest orders of being and from the lowest, from priests, and apostles, and sages, and heroes, yea, from the Redeemer, from the Divinity himself. Harken to the voice of the unwearied sun, who, day by day, cometh forth from his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. Harken to the speech of the waters in their ceaseless rise and fall, to the language of nature in all her laboratories, in all her processes. Listen for a message from angels, who rest not night nor day, singing the praises, and executing the commandments of their Maker. And then shut not the ear to the eloquence of example; but suffer yourselves to be addressed by Him who "never slumbereth, nor sleepeth," by Him again "who went about doing good," by those who were "instant in season, out of season," by the excellent, the illustrious, whether of the past or of the present. What is the universal call? what the lesson, for the syllabing of which the whole system and order of creation appears to have grown vocal, which the speechless articulate, the silent publish, the dead preach? Ah! there are no words which find more utterances, none which may be more distinctly heard, by the ear of reason, from every planet in its everlasting march, from every process of vegetation, from every spirit before God's throne, from every insect as it walks its little span, and from every sepulchre which holds the dust of the good, than those which recommend and inculcate industry—but words which praise industry, prove that God was appointing a blessing, though in the form of a curse, when He said to our first parent, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

And if you search for an apt exhibition of assiduous and successful industry, you have it in that noble Corporation whose representatives are now assembled in this place. The edict which took its first fruitfulness from the soil, left one land in possession of one produce, another of another. What mercy, then, was mingled with the judgment! If every land had produced the same things, and with the same ease, there

would have been no scope for commerce; and without commerce, the different tribes of men would have had little or no intercourse: strangers to each other, if not enemies, they would have known nothing of the bond of universal brotherhood. So then commerce, with all its humanizing tendencies—for they are vastly mistaken who regard commerce as the mere machine of avarice and luxury—it may subserve the noblest purposes, circumnavigating the globe to diffuse every where kindly sentiments, the precious truths of science, the immeasurably more precious of Christianity—commerce, then, with all its humanizing tendencies, has sprung from that cursing of the ground which is recorded in our text. But what industry is needed for the successful prosecution of commerce! What mighty results have sprung from man's being doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his face! The stately ship, the sublime searchings of astronomy, the triumphs of the engineer in the lighthouse and the chart, the mastery of the elements, the creation of a new power which may be almost said to bridle the winds and waves, and make man supreme on the deep as on the land—all are to be traced to that sentence upon Adam, of which some would complain as breathing only wrath.

And the Corporation here assembled, is but the embodying of these various achievements of industry. Under the headship of one whose unweariedness in labor has been, and is, his country's safeguard, this Corporation spreads its shield over commerce. The chart, the beacon, the buoy, the pilot, it is assiduous in providing all these, that the mariner may have every possible aid in prosecuting his adventurous course. Long may it continue its beneficent labors. If it seem strange that a Corporation such as this, combining the illustrious by deed, the noble by birth, the foremost in trade, the lofty in science, should have actually arisen from the malediction on the earth when its days were yet few, at least let us admire the Providence of God which hath overruled for good what bore the air of unmingled disaster; let us pray that navigation may continue to receive this fostering care, till its noblest ends shall have all been fulfilled, till, in the old age of the

world, ships shall have borne to every land the glad tidings of the Gospel, and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas."

The great lesson, then, which we learn from the text is, that industry is honorable and beneficial; that the Almighty was blessing us when He made labor our inheritance. Let all apply the lesson, ceasing to repine where we ought rather to be grateful, and determining to be more diligent than ever in performing the duties allotted us by God. Even this Corporation may take the lesson. It has but to relax its industry, and a navy may perish. If it were to grow remiss in its high functions, the sunken rocks, the treacherous quicksands, would soon be the scenes of frightful tragedies; or those worse foes to seamen than rocks or quicksands—ignorant or drunken pilots—yes, let pilots hear that; worse are they than the rock, worse than the quicksand, if they be ignorant or drunken—these would soon multiply, and make playthings of the life and property of thousands.

But we have no fears that this Corporation will relax in its industry. Let us rather, in conclusion, speak of the industry required from all in their spiritual capacity, as Christians, as candidates for the kingdom of heaven. It is not the representation of Scripture, however it may be the imagination of numbers, that religion is an easy thing, so that immortality may be secured with no great effort on the part of the sinner. The Christian life is likened to a battle in which we may be defeated, to a race in which we may be outstripped, to a stewardship in which we may be unfaithful. Who indeed, that thinks for a moment on the virtues required from us as Christians,—charity, temperance, meekness, patience, humility, contentment,—will imagine that a believer may be idle, finding nothing in his spiritual calling to exercise diligence. These virtues, we may venture to say are all against nature, only to be acquired through strife with ourselves, and preserved by constant war. And though Divine grace alone can enable us whether to acquire or preserve, it does not supersede our own efforts; it makes those efforts effectual, but never works in us but by and through ourselves.

Be then industrious in religion; we can tolerate indolence anywhere rather than here,—here where Eternity is at stake,—here where an hour's sluggishness may be fatal. We have no respect, indeed, for the indolent man, let his indolence show itself in what form it may. One of your idlers, who sleeps away life, doing listlessly what he is compelled to do, and only pleased when he can be left undisturbed, hardly deserves the name of man,—man's characteristic is restlessness; restlessness foretells his immortality; and the sluggard, by his apathy, seems to destroy the mark, and silence the prophecy. But, if contemptible in other things, indolence may not be actually fatal: the indolent man may have wealth which secures him against want; and by the occasional exercise of rare talents, he may even in spite of habitual sluggishness, attain to some measure of distinction. But an indolent Christian,—it is a sort of contradiction; Christianity is industry spiritualized: the sluggard in religion would be a sluggard in escaping from the burning house, or the sinking ship,—but who ever loitered when death was at his heels?

Let us work, then, "while it is called

to-day;" "the night cometh when no man can work." The sentence of our text has gone forth, and all must submit, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." There is no exemption for greatness, none for goodness. The path of glory, the path of science, the path of usefulness, all alike terminate in the grave. The time is at hand when all of us, though widely separated in earthly circumstances, must lie down together in the dust. But if dust we are, and unto dust we must return, immortal also we are, and over us death hath no abiding power. We will not, then, repine that sin hath brought death into the world; we will rejoice that Christ hath brought "life and immortality to light by his Gospel." Shipwrecked we must be; life is but a voyage, and every barque sinks at last, a broken and dislocated thing. But we have but to steer by the chart of the Gospel, and take as our pole-star the Redeemer, which is Christ, and the shattered vessels shall yet be found floating in the haven where we would be: body and soul are reserved alike for glorious destiny; the corruptible shall put on incorruption, the mortal immortality.

S E R M O N V .

THE SHIPWRECK.

“ But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.”—JONAH I. 4, 5.

You will probably all remember how it came to pass that Jonah was brought into these perilous circumstances. In his character of a prophet, he had received directions from God to hasten to Nineveh, and to announce the near ruin of that mighty and idolatrous capital. But Jonah probably thought that he should be treated with insult, if not put to death, by the Ninevites: he, therefore, resolved to disobey, and, embarking in a ship bound for Tarshish, directed his course to the opposite quarter from that enjoined him by God. But God had his eye on his rebellious servant, and would not suffer him to proceed undisturbed in transgression. Lord as He is of the elements, so that He “bringeth the wind out of his treasures,” He could raise a sudden and mighty tempest, and thus effectually intercept the disobedient Prophet. And this, we read, He did; the storm which overtook the vessel being evidently of no ordinary kind, but such as forced the mariners to a conviction, that, from some cause or another, the anger of an incensed Deity pursued them.

Now if it were in the power of circumstances to make men religious, there is no class of persons with whom we might expect to find more of piety than with mariners, those who “go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters.” Well might the Psalmist say, and the hearts of many in this assembly can respond to the words, “These men see the works of the Lord,

and his wonders in the deep.” There is no portion of the globe so wonderful in its manifestation of divinity as the ocean. Whether it sleep beautifully in the tranquilities of an unbroken calm, or be wrought by the hurricane into madness, it is a more stupendous object, wakening sublimer thoughts, and prompting to loftier musings, than the most glorious combination of valley and mountain.

If, then, any part of this creation is to bring men into acquaintance with the Creator, to teach them his greatness and awfulness, and to prevail with them to inquire how his favor may be gained, it must, we should think, be the sea: to that page may natural theology best point, when it would show characters which publish God’s might; to that mirror may it best look, when it would catch the reflection of an invisible Ruler. But it is comparatively little that the waters of the great deep thus preach of a Divinity; it is not difficult for the human mind to close itself against the strongest notices which creation can give of a Creator. Consider, then, for a moment, the dangers of the sea, the perils which encompass those who live upon its surges—dangers and perils not always to be escaped, even where the noble Corporation before which I speak, has lighted its beacons, and fastened its buoys. Well, again, hath the Psalmist said, “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.” The life

* Preached before the Corporation of Trinity House, on Trinity Monday, 1846.

of a sailor is a life of constant risk. He cannot reckon for an hour on the security of the frail vessel in which he is embarked; the sky, now serene, may be overcast with clouds; the tempest may be upon him, as a giant in his fury; and in spite of his courage and seamanship, he may be thrown as a plaything to the waves, his ship rent into a thousand shreds, and himself and all his comrades struggling vainly with death.

But though it be thus certain that the ocean is wondrously adapted, both by its magnificence and dangers, to lead those conversant with it to a knowledge and fear of their Creator, is it not the fact that there is, at least, as little of seriousness of thought, and of preparation for death, in men whose business is on the waters, as in others who have no such marvels to behold, and no such perils to encounter? Without designing to charge a special want of religion on any one class of men, we may say of sailors generally, that they are striking illustrations of the powerlessness of circumstances to make men religious; for conversant as they are with what is grandest in the workmanship of God, and almost momentarily in evident jeopardy of their lives, they are not, perhaps, as a body, more mindful of their Maker, nor more provident for eternity, than if there were nothing in their condition to induce devotional habits. If there were any scene on which natural religion might be expected to win a triumph, any individual whom it might be expected to subdue, that scene, undoubtedly, is the ocean, when tossing its billows to the sky, and that individual is the mariner whom it threatens to overwhelm. But the general habits of a seafaring population prove the inefficiency of natural religion, of that religion which has nothing but the volume of creation for its Bible, and nothing but conscience for its preacher. The ocean itself does not practically reveal a God to those best acquainted with its wonders, and conscience itself does not work true repentance in those most scared by its terrors. In vain doth Deity glass, as it were, his eternity in the vast mirror of the waters: in vain doth He come riding, magnificently but terribly, on the whirlwind; the mariner can look on the waves in their gloriousness, and

be menaced by them in their fury, and, nevertheless, remain in utter ignorance of God, or open defiance of his laws.

The crew of the ship in which Jonah sailed, may be referred to in evidence of this. They were a crew of idolaters, every man, apparently, having a different deity; for you observe that it is said in our text, "The mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god." They were not deficient in courage or seamanship: they took vigorous measures for their safety, forgetting, when life was in danger, what was, perhaps, only second to it in their esteem, and casting away their cargo that the vessel might be lightened. But in their applications to an invisible power, they betrayed all the absurdities of the very worst idolatry; for every man had his own god to address, so that there was nothing less than a Babel of worship. It was not, of course, in this moment of fear and perplexity that the several individuals imagined or selected a deity. They had, probably, been idolaters from their youth; and now that they seemed given over to death, each had nothing better to do than cry to that fabulous being, which, from some cause or another, he had chosen as his own. But if ever the ocean was to have given back to those who sailed upon its bosom the image of the one true God, might it not have been expected to have done so to men who each worshipped a different divinity? for what could be a greater practical demonstration to them that their religion was false, than that they all disagreed as to who God was? and if their religion was false, if their deities were deceits, what more to have been looked for than that they should have sought afresh for the invisible, but Omnipotent Being, who "holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand," and "hath his way in the whirlwind and the storm?" But no—they voyaged together over the mighty expanse; they had evidence of the falseness of their religion forced on them by its diversity; the waters continually preached to them of God, preached to them in the calm and in the tempest; but so practically powerless is natural religion, even under the most favorable circumstances, that, when they came into danger, and had to appeal to Deity to shield them from death

they were still found to be idolaters, idolaters who stood self-convicted of the folly of idolatry.

And if all this be true, if, notwithstanding the magnificent imagery of God which is continually around him, and the perils by which he is encompassed, the sailor is apt to think little of the duties of religion, how important, how unspeakably important, the office of that Corporation in whose presence I speak! It is not merely property of which you are the guardians—though commerce may be said to commit its treasures to your care; nay it is not merely life—though your lighthouses, your charts, and your pilots, preserve, under God, the thousands who navigate our intricate channels; it is immortality itself, over which you keep watch. It is the soul for which burns that lonely spark, in the darkest night and amid the fiercest storm. You guard the seaman in his years of carelessness, and perhaps even profligacy, that opportunity may be granted him (O God, grant that it be not given in vain!) of yet avoiding that last shipwreck, when the sensual, and the careless, and the proud, shall be broken by the breath of the Almighty's displeasure.

But it is time that we pass from considering what relates to the conduct of the crew, to the examining what is told us of Jonah, in this hour of imminent peril. Jonah had, perhaps, more cause than any other in the vessel to be disturbed, and filled with apprehension by the storm; and we might have expected to find him the most earnest in crying for deliverance. Yet strange to say, he was "gone down into the sides of the ship, and was fast asleep," so that the shipmaster had roughly to awaken him, in order to make him sensible of the danger. A singular contrast—he, a worshipper of the true God, though actually endeavoring to flee from his presence, manifested utter insensibility in perilous circumstances; whilst even idolaters, who were not, perhaps, at the time chargeable with extraordinary sin, did all that a false religion could teach them, and sought help from invisible powers. And was it not the severest rebuke which could have been administered to a servant of Jehovah, that a heathen, an idolater, should rouse him

from his sleep, and urge upon him the duty of making supplications to his god? If another of the servants of the true God had come to him, and addressed him in the startling terms, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God," the rebuke would have been comparatively nothing, though even then full of just bitterness. But that one who knew no religion but a false should summon to duty, and reprove for its neglect, a man instructed in truth, and professedly dedicated to the service of the one living God,—this indeed was severe and stern upbraiding; if any thing could make Jonah feel, it must have been, we think, the being thus addressed by a Pagan.

And are we to draw no lesson from this part of the narrative? Is there nothing uttered in the present day, analogous to the remonstrance of the shipmaster, by the heathen to Christians? We never question (who can justly question?) that the zeal with which Pagans serve their idols, and the readiness with which they often submit to the austerities prescribed by superstition, will rise up hereafter in judgment against multitudes in a Christian land, who neglect the true God, though clearly revealed, and shrink from his service, though that service is freedom. The very heathen put us to shame, for they will manifest a most devoted earnestness in what they count religious duties, and will be actually unwearied in their endeavors to propitiate the unknown powers whom they suppose the arbiters of their fate; whilst we, blessed with ample discoveries of the Ruler of the universe, and taught the only method of gaining his favor, are apt to count the least sacrifice excessive, and to display no result of the being emancipated from superstition, but the being indifferent to religion.

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." It is no unfair inference, from the assiduousness with which the heathen will often act up to their scanty measure of light, that, had they been privileged with a greater, with the measure, for example, vouchsafed to our

selves, they would have far exceeded us in obedience, in the performance of those duties which Revelation makes obligatory on those blessed with its beams. Assuredly, then, there will be no need of other witnesses against us, in order to ensure an aggravated condemnation, if from the islands and continents of the earth, on which there has not shined the light of the Gospel, there is to issue a throng, whose actions will be evidence, that more had been done where only little had been given, than where God had been largest in discovery and assistance. Will it not suffice to make the Christian, who has failed to improve his superior advantages, shrink away in the consciousness that he must have to bear a sentence of unusual severity, if there be arrayed against him the eminent of the heathen, men who sought painfully and incessantly for truth, amid the mysterious shadows with which they were encompassed, and who were willing to endure any hardship, or attempt any duty, which they thought prescribed by the deities in whose existence they believed?

It is in this way, and without any forced attempt at instituting a parallel, that we may regard the heathen as acting towards Christians the very part of the shipmaster towards Jonah. Why may we not liken the whole globe to a vessel tossing on a stormy sea? for is there a solitary one, amongst all its inhabitants, who is not in danger of shipwreck; embarked on dark waters, and carried on by a resistless current, towards an unknown shore, where, but too probably, he may be a castaway for eternity? And may we not say of the crew of this mighty ship, that every man has his god, there being as St. Paul hath said, "gods many, and lords many," though there be, in reality, but one Creator and Ruler, and "one Mediator between God and man?" But who, of all the mariners, are most assiduous in their endeavors to get safe to land? Are the worshippers of the true God conspicuous above the worshippers of idols, by their fervency in prayer, by their strenuousness of effort? May they be distinguished by the greater sense which they manifest of exposure to danger, and by their greater diligence in using all such means of deliverance as have been furnished them from

above? On the contrary, are not thousands of them sunk in the deepest moral apathy, engrossed with petty concerns, caring apparently for nothing but perishable good, though momentarily in danger of being plunged headlong into the waves? And are there not, on the other hand, many of the slaves of idolatry, who are striving, might and main, to turn from them the anger of some imagined divinity, wearying Heaven with petitions, and wearing themselves down with toils, so as not only to reprove the indolent and careless of a Christian community, but even to admonish the most earnest to take heed that they be not outdone in diligence?

But if it be true, that, as the vast vessel rises and falls on the boisterous surges, there are found amongst its crew the heathen, who are praying and struggling for deliverance, and the Christians, who are supine and insensible to danger, what, we ask of you, are the one but the idolatrous shipmaster, what the other but the Prophet of God? the shipmaster doing all that his seamanship, and his knowledge of a Supreme Being, could suggest; the prophet buried in deep slumber, and without care for the peril. As there are borne to the Christian, in his sluggishness and neglect of many privileges, tidings how the heathen will lacerate the limbs, and dare bravely long penance, in hopes of shunning the danger of which he seems to make no account, what is to be said, if not that the shipmaster is again upon Jonah, fast asleep in the side of the vessel, and crying to him in a voice whose echoes will be heard amid all the stir of final judgment, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God?" Need we do what the mariners did, have recourse to the lot, in order to determine the guilty party? We suspect not. The character is of such common occurrence, that perhaps many in the present assembly may be conscious of the likeness. After all their entreaty, and all their remonstrance, the ministers of Christ are still forced to believe, that if they go down to the sides of the ship, they shall find many fast locked in sleep, requiring to be addressed in the rough words of the shipmaster, though, alas! by no means sure to be roused by the summons. We must search them out: for

like Jonah, they may not be on the deck where every one can observe them; and we must say to them individually, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?"

What means the man of the world, sleeping the sleep of pleasure? What means the lover of wealth, stupified by his gold? What means the man of ambition, dreaming of worthless honors? What mean they by slumbering? Know they not that the ship has sprung a leak; that the tempest is so fierce that she is driven to and fro, a mere straw upon the waters, the masts shivered, the rudder broken? And can they sleep? sleep amid the tumult of the elements? sleep, when in another moment they may be in the eddies of the whirlpool?

And do they wonder at Jonah? do they marvel that he could remain in profound slumber, whilst the winds were howling, and the waves boiling? It is their own case. The conscience of Jonah was drugged, was lethargic—otherwise he would have been upon the deck, praying, struggling for deliverance; and conscience with these men has had an opiate,—otherwise should we see them casting out their wares, laying aside, as the Apostle saith, "every weight, using every art, and applying every engine, that they might yet reach the haven of everlasting life. The shipmaster did not call upon the prophet to use his own strength and skill in saving the vessel, but only to be earnest in imploring help from above. "Arise, call upon thy God." The case, on all human calculation, was desperate. Every thing had been done which a bold crew could effect, but all in vain: and now, unless God speedily interposed, the vessel must go down, and all on board perish. It is the same in our own day. It is the same, for example, with the actual mariner—the lighthouse shows the rock, the pilot is at the helm, the chart is consulted, courage has done its utmost; but unless He, of whom it is said, "The sea is his, and he made it," come to the aid of the gallant fellows, alas! alas! the merciless tempest must soon sweep them all into one deep grave. The sailor must look, must pray, to the "holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity," whilst he uses all the means, and exhausts all the resources, provided or prescribed by the noble

Corporation, which, as taking its name from that Trinity, throws a sacredness round its efforts to shield human life. But the case is also the same morally with all of you. If we summon you to prayer, it is not to prayer unaccompanied with effort. We bid you pray; but we expect that, along with prayer, there will be strenuous exertion, the bending of every power, the strain of every muscle, the surrender of every incumbering possession, that the ship may be lightened, and ride out the storm. Prayer is valuable, prayer is sincere, only as it is attended by diligence in the use of every known means. With the consciousness that he cannot save himself, man is to act as if he could; throwing out the earthly cargo, lashing the rudder, sounding the waters; but wital, committing himself unreservedly to Christ, who alone can say to the turbid elements, "Peace, be still," and bring him to the "haven where he would be."

And who can think for a moment of the shipwreck of death, and not long to have Christ with him in the vessel? It must come, that dark and disastrous hour, when the timbers of the ship shall be loosened, and a tempest, not to be withstood, shall hurry her towards the shore of the invisible world. What is then to become of the slumberers, of those who are not to be roused by the call of the shipmaster? They must wake, if not while the vessel is being tossed and shattered, yet so soon as she lies a wreck upon the strand. But to wake with the consciousness that they can never sleep again; to wake only to behold themselves lost, lost beyond power of recovery, lost for eternity! O God, we cannot imagine that wakening; save Thou us from knowing it by experience!

How different the closing scene of those who are aware of moral peril, and seeking safety in Christ! They, too, must be wrecked. There is no exemption from this; all who have voyaged on the waters of life must submit to the vessel being broken up by death. And we know not how this final dislocation will be effected; whether by a gentle or a severe process; whether the vessel shall be cast upon rocks, and beaten to pieces by the storm, or whether she shall sink, as ships have sunk, whilst the

sea is as glass, and the sky without a cloud. But whether the shipwreck occur in the hurricane or in the calm, the soul will spring safely to the shore, which she hath long looked to as her rest. And when a new morning breaks, as break it shall, on this long-darkened creation, the very fragments of the shatter-

ed vessels shall all be collected; the navy which had been rent into shreds, shall be splendidly rebuilt; and the Church of the Redeemer, composed of glorified souls in glorified bodies, shall be found resting tranquilly in that promised home, where "the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams."

S E R M O N V I . *

ANGELS REJOICING IN THE GOSPEL.

* And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."—ST. LUKE II. 13 14.

The service of this day must be regarded as one of the most solemn and imposing in which men can engage. A building has been consecrated to God, set apart, by one invested with apostolic authority, for the ministrations of the Christian religion. From the earliest times, the Almighty required that places or structures should be thus appropriated to his service. There is, indeed, a sense in which the Creator dwelleth not in temples made with hands. We may regard the universe, in the immenseness of its spreadings, as one magnificent cathedral, whose aisles, rich with the tracery of stars and planets, are every where inhabited by Deity. But nevertheless it has appeared from the first, that certain niches, so to speak, in this infinite edifice were peculiarly to be consecrated to God, so that, if the whole creation were holy, there might be spots in it which should each serve as a "holy of holies." We find the patriarchs were accustomed to rear altars, hallowing the scenes where they call on the name of the Lord. We know that, when Israel wandered through the wilderness

—the pillar of cloud his guide by day and the pillar of fire by night—God required that a tabernacle should be reared with costly and curious skill, condescending even to inspire the artificers with wisdom, that the workmanship might be unequalled in beauty. And who can forget, that, when the land of promise was gained, and God had given to the chosen seed rest from their enemies, the blood on David's hands, though it was that of the Lord's foes, deprived this righteous monarch of the honor of rearing a temple,—God hereby showing that the work was so holy and august, that not even the appearance of pollution could be tolerated in those who were employed thereupon? The honor was reserved for Solomon, a prince upon whom God had bestowed such rare endowments, and whom He had exalted by such a concurrence of prosperous events, that it would seem, says an old divine, "as if God had made it his business to build a Solomon, in order that Solomon might build him an house." The work was completed; and, almost burdened with the riches of the earth, the temple of Jerusalem soared above the city, the splendid triumph of architecture. Then it was that a demonstra-

* Preached at the consecration of the church of St. John the Evangelist, Brighton.

tion, never to be forgotten, was given of the favor with which God regards places devoted to his worship. The monarch stood on a scaffold of burnished brass, and round him were gathered the princes and nobles of the land. The congregation of Israel had assembled as one man at the bidding of their king, and sheep and oxen were sacrificed which could not be told nor numbered for multitude. The Levites, clothed in white linen, stood at the east end of the altar, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps; and with them an hundred and twenty priests, sounding with trumpets. And it came to pass, that, whilst the firmament rang with the music of these divers instruments, and the voices of the singers rose high in God's praise, there descended majestically a cloud of glory: the Almighty took possession of his house with such overpowering tokens of approval, that the priests shrank back, as though withered by the brilliant manifestation, and "could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud."

There ought never after this to be question, that "God loves the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." And when, in addition to the proofs furnished by what took place under introductory dispensations, we can adduce the uniform practice of the Christian Church from apostolic days downward, we feel that the solemn ceremonies of this morning have so high a vindication, that it were worse than superfluous to discourse on their propriety. To God, then, and to his service, has this building been devoted. Henceforward it is to be stately used for public worship, the preaching of the Gospel, and the administering of the Christian sacraments. And I know not that I could select a more appropriate subject for the first sermon delivered within these walls, than that presented by our text. Let us take angels for our pattern in commencing, as it were, the proclamations of the Gospel: the words which the birth of Christ drew from these lofty intelligences, must be specially adapted for the opening announcement of the great scheme of redemption.

These words naturally divide themselves into two parts,—the one, a demand of praise to God from the highest orders of being; the other, a statement of the reason why this praise should be

given. Or we may say, with no great variation from this account of the doxology, that the incarnation, with its consequences, is here represented as a fresh cause why angels should glorify God; whilst the work, which the newborn babe will achieve, is described as "peace on earth," or "good-will towards men." We shall observe this division in arranging the remainder of our discourse, trusting that, after expounding to you the angelic account of that Gospel, for the propagation of which this house has been reared, there will be little need for any lengthened remarks on the duty of assisting in providing churches for a rapidly increasing population. Our first topic, then, will be, the motive to the glorifying God, which the incarnation furnished to angels; the second, the accuracy of the description of redemption, that it is "peace on earth," or "good-will towards men."

Now we may fairly doubt, whether up to the time of Christ's birth, angels had been made thoroughly acquainted with the plan of our redemption. The cherubim, who bended over the ark, full as it was of solemn and typical mysteries, seemed to denote by their attitude—an attitude to which St. Peter refers when saying, "which things the angels desire to look into,"—that God had given to them, as to mankind, only obscure intimations of his great purpose of mercy. Since, moreover, St. Paul speaks of the manifold wisdom of God as now made known by the Church unto the powers and principalities in heavenly places, we seem warranted in supposing that it was not until the eternal Son had actually entered on his awful undertaking, that its nature was fully revealed even to the highest created intelligence. Then, it may be, it burst at once on the angel and the archangel, so that the incarnation was to them the discovery of the long-hidden secret. It was enough for them to know that Deity had mysteriously united itself to humanity, and the problem was solved on which they had hopelessly bent all the might of their intellect. They had, then, that element in the stupendous calculation, which, left to themselves, they could never have introduced, but which, once furnished, made comparatively easy the ascertaining all the rest. So that the moment in which the Mediator was

born, would be to them the moment of immense discovery; and we might expect to find it one of loud ascriptions of praise. And forasmuch as the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God comprehend all his attributes, and to acknowledge these is to give Him glory, we have only to examine whether these were not singularly manifested to angels in the incarnation of Christ, and you will understand why that event caused the heavenly beings to glorify God.

We begin with wisdom: and shall we hesitate to say of the scheme of our redemption—a scheme, you observe, all whose parts were thrown open at once to angels by the incarnation—that it is the mightiest display ever put forth of this divine property? Here was a province of God's empire, that had thrown off its allegiance,—a province on which He had shed profusely the rich and the beautiful, which He had given to creatures fashioned after his own image, on whose faculties there was no bias to make them swerve from obedience, and on whom He imposed the gentlest trial as preparatory to admission to still higher enjoyments. And when these creatures, in spite of every advantage thus liberally imparted, yielded at once to the suggestions of evil, there seemed to remain nothing but final separation from God, nothing but that this globe, if still left to trace her orbit, should trace it as a wrecked and depopulated thing, preaching to other stars the fearfulness of disobedience. And it was with the problem of restoring this earth without dishonoring its Maker, that finite wisdom was quite unable to cope. But infinite wisdom arranged a plan, which made man's rescue not only consistent with the honor of God, but a source of the greatest revenue of glory. And, in arranging this plan, wisdom was required to undertake the guardianship of every other perfection: she must set herself to the task of preserving justice inviolate, and holiness immaculate, and truth uncompromised; and yet of allowing love to go forth to the succor of transgressors. So that, whilst the remaining properties of Godhead might shroud themselves, each in its own dignities and claims, wisdom must be occupied in embracing them all within the range of her device, manifesting herself by upholding the rest.

What then shall be said of the incarnation, but that it overpoweringly exhibited to angels the wisdom of their Maker? No sooner had the Godhead joined itself to the manhood, than the mystery, which had been hid for ages in the Eternal Mind, brake forth, splendid with the coruscations of wisdom, and "a wave of delighted sensibility" must have gone down the ranks of the heavenly hosts; and no marvel that, with one accord, they should have sent up such an anthem, that shepherds, on the plains of Bethlehem, caught its echo. It was not so much the display of love which moved them; for they knew long before, that infinite love had induced God to plan man's redemption. It was not the display of justice; for in their own debates they must have computed on a justice which could not pass by iniquity. It was not the display of holiness; for it would have been to undeify Deity, to suppose Him capable of admitting the impure into communion with Himself. It must have been the wisdom which chiefly amazed them; the manifold wisdom—manifold, for it had reconciled every opposing interest; it had provided for every possible emergency; it had left no point neglected, either in the attributes of the Creator, or the necessities of the creature—this wisdom, manifested in that process of rescue, which stood developed before them in the Word being made flesh, must have filled with new ecstacy the angelic company; yea, must have introduced such a new epoch, as it were, in the heavenly annals, that, as though there had heretofore been silence in the majestic temple of the skies, and no ascriptions of praise had proceeded from that throng who moved in the light of God's immediate presence, we might expect that one rank would call to another, even as they did in the hearing of the amazed and almost terrified Isaiah, and that angel to archangel, principality to power, Cherubim to Seraphim, would roll the summons, "Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory, glory to God in the highest."

But if the manifestation of wisdom must have been specially that which called forth the celestial song, there were, we doubt not, notes in that song which were wakened by the manifestation of power. It showed Omnipotence

at least as much to create man the second time as the first. To rebuild what sin had thrown down was as mighty an act as to speak it out of nothingness. We should rather say mightier. It cost God nothing to create an universe; "he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." But it cost him the gift of his own Son—who shall measure it?—to redeem a single planet. We know not how to express to you what we think of the power displayed in the work of our redemption. It is possible that this attribute of God is not so generally recognized as are others in the interference of Christ; but indeed there is none whose manifestation is more marked or more wonderful. It was not merely that God entered into conflict with and overcame Satan. Angels knew, and men knew, that the power of God was immeasurably greater than the power of Satan; and that, therefore, if the two were antagonists, there could not be doubt on which side would be victory. But the amazing display of God's power is that of power over Himself. This had been exhibited from the first moment of our apostacy. When penalty had been incurred, and God forbore to strike, then was the grandest demonstration of Omnipotence. If I would figure to myself Almightyness, creation is as nothing to me when compared with long-suffering. Worlds upon worlds, systems upon systems, a syllable peopling immensity, and causing the untravelled solitude to teem with life, all this conveys to me no such august idea of Omnipotence, as God's bearing with sinners, and not striking down the rebellious. We say again, that long-suffering is God's power over Himself; it is restraint on his own attributes,—and that matter is at his disposal, this is nothing; that spirit is at his disposal, this is nothing; but that He can be insulted, and not take vengeance; defied, and not crush; blasphemed, and not annihilate; this is the overcoming truth; this is the being Omnipotent enough to control Omnipotence; and myself, in my constant offences, a living thing and yet a sinful, myself am greater proof how mighty is the Lord, than the earth with all its wonders, and the firmament with all its hosts.

But this is not the only respect in

which redemption displayed power. Redemption demanded the humiliation of God; and that God could humble Himself—it was the same kind of demonstration of Omnipotence, though we know not whether it be not yet more surprising, as that furnished by long-suffering. God could not make Himself: to be divine, He must necessarily be self-existent. And if He could not produce, neither could He destroy Himself; it being just as contrary to the divine nature, to suppose Him ceasing as beginning to be God. But that, without ceasing to be God, He should be able to empty Himself, as in the strong language of Scripture, to circumscribe Himself within a human body, and to put off his glories by shrouding Himself in matter—we say of this, that it was apparently such an approach towards the suspension, or even the cessation, of Deity, it was drawing so close to the impossibility, that imagination can figure nothing that could more task Omnipotence—to cease to be God, this was the impossible: to remain God, and yet be found in the likeness of man, this was not the impossible, but until done, was the inconceivable; oh, it was the stopping of the pulse, and yet keeping the life! the giving that to be born which never had beginning, to die which never can have end. If we may use such expression, there seemed to be in humility a natural unsuitableness to divinity: it becomes the created; but appears excluded, by his very nature, from the uncreated. And, therefore, that God should humble Himself, that He who was rich should for our sakes become poor, it is not merely, nor mainly, the condescension, or the loving-kindness, which is wonderful in this; it is the power—and that divinity and humanity should coalesce to make a Mediator, I more recognize Omnipotence in the effecting such combination, than in all those registers of might, whose letters are the mountains or whose syllables the stars.

And then, again, the power displayed throughout the application of redemption, displayed in the change of heart, in the renewal of nature, and finally in the quickening of the dust of saints; so that this corruptible puts on incorruption, this mortal immortality, where shall we find the parallel to this? And

when you combine these several demonstrations of Almightyness, and suppose that angels read each in the incarnation, seeing that to them the incarnation revealed the whole of redemption, you must admit that the power as well as the wisdom of the Most High was so manifested by Christ's birth to heavenly beings, that "Gloria in excelsis" might be expected as their chorus. There had undoubtedly been thrown open to these lofty creatures the natural and spiritual creations, so that free to expatiate over the work of God's hands, and to penetrate its wonders, they had gathered such ideas as are unattainable by ourselves of Him to whom they referred all the architecture and all the animation. But when Deity was before them, manifesting long-suffering, that power over Himself which had not been shown when their own compeers transgressed—for with the fall of angels came vengeance, and to be a rebel was to be crushed—and when divinity was exhibited in humility, such might having been applied to the mightiest as brought him down from his inaccessible splendors, and made Him of no reputation; and yet further, when they saw how corruption would be eradicated from the corruptible, and graves resign their vast population, and death be swallowed up in victory, and an innumerable company of the apostate become kings and priests unto the living God, and new heavens and a new earth rise from the ruin and wreck of the old, and all through the energies of the one work of mediation; oh, we think it must have been as nothing to them that they had traversed creation in its height and breadth and length, and found Omnipotence at every step; redemption was such a fresh and unrivalled display of Almightyness, that, as though now for the first time they had learned that nothing was too hard for the Lord, they would excite each the other with the inspiring summons, "Glory, glory to God in the highest."

You are to add to all this, that, in God's purpose towards men, as laid open by the incarnation, angels must have found such proofs of divine goodness as they could not gather from any other exhibition. That their Creator was a being of amazing benevolence, full of love towards the obedient—of

this it was impossible they could entertain doubt: their own existence, and their own enjoyments, attested a principle in Deity, leading Him to desire and design the universal happiness. But they had not beheld mercy rejoicing against judgment. Nothing had occurred, but quite the reverse, to inform them that the love of their Maker could be proof against baseness, against ingratitude, against rebellion. In the only instance, so far as we know, besides our own, in which creatures had thrown off allegiance, love had seemed extinguished by apostacy, and made no attempt to mitigate the severities of justice. Angels might therefore have supposed, judging from what had happened in their own rank of being, that to displease God was to lose, at once and for ever, all share in his mercies. They could have had no idea, until informed of God's dealings with men, that divine love was of a nature, and a strength, to triumph over unworthiness, and preserve its attachments in spite of the enmity of its objects. It was not possible that such idea could be gathered from any of the ordinary demonstrations of benevolence, from those exuberant and tender compassions which encircled, as they knew, and attended the countless tribes that had done nothing to alienate divine favor. Until there had been disobedience, they could not determine whether love could bear with ingratitude; and when the disobedience came, and evil first entered the universe, the decision must have been, that ingratitude turned love into hatred. And, therefore, when they found the divine compassions encompassing man in the midst of his rebellion, and saw that love could subsist unimpaired when every thing had been done to alienate and quench it; will you not allow that the goodness of the Almighty was displayed to them under an aspect heretofore unimagined, and perhaps even thought impossible; an aspect which it did not wear when busied with ministering to the wants of all ranks in creation, and wondrously providing that there should be happiness, wheresoever there was innocence, throughout the universe? and shall we then marvel that, as though then for the first time known to be infinitely benevolent, because then for the first time commending his love by fixing

it on an enemy, our Maker should have seemed to angels to demand a new anthem of enraptured adoration, so that all the company of heaven, learning from the incarnation what divine mercy was, uttered and answered to the summons, "Glory, glory to God in the highest?"

We will, however, turn to the considering the description which angels give of the work of redemption; and which, if we rightly interpret the doxology, contains much of their reason for praising the Lord. Let glory—this seems the import of the passage—be ascribed to God by the highest ranks in creation: for there is now peace on earth, that is, good-will towards men. Considering redemption as already completed,—for the incarnation, though only the commencement, gave certain pledge of the consummation,—angels allege as its consequence, that peace long banished from the earth, is restored, for that God can now again entertain "good-will towards men." Hence they identify, or represent as the same thing, good-will being felt to mankind, and peace being re-established upon earth. And it is this identity on which we now have to speak. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The Mediator, by obeying and dying in our stead, removed those separating causes which kept us far off from our Maker: He did not, indeed, render us the objects of good-will,—that we were already, otherwise there would have been no interference on our behalf,—but He made it honorable on the part of God to show us good-will, consistent with his attributes to deal with us as no longer enemies. Hence it might accurately be said, that, when Christ was born, there was "good-will towards men:" the birth was the earnest of the world's redemption; and redemption, though it produced not the good-will, made a clear space for its exercise. And that God could now display good-will towards men, inasmuch as He had reconciled them to Himself, was virtually the same thing as that there was now "peace upon earth." There was peace upon earth in the noblest and most important of all senses: God and man were at peace; those who sometimes were far off being made nigh by Christ's blood.

But, indeed, if God's good-will towards men were to produce its legitimate effects, there would be peace upon earth in a larger and more literal signification. It is possible that angels, when exulting that a surety had been found for humankind, contemplated results which ought indeed to have followed, but which our corruption has arrested. There would verily be peace upon earth, and that too because there is good-will towards men, if the tendencies of Christianity were not counteracted by the passions of those whom it addresses. We know not whether, engrossed with magnificent consequences which have the future for their scene, we are not apt to overlook the present benefits which Christianity is adapted to confer. We are not to judge these benefits by what we see produced, but by what would be produced, if acknowledged tendencies were allowed their full scope. The tendencies of the Gospel—and these, it may be, excited the gladness of angels,—are manifestly to the banishing discord in its every shape, to the repressing envy, and malice, and ill-will, and to the linking in the closest brotherhood all the families of our race. And it may, indeed, be of yet distant days that prophecy speaks, when declaring that men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." But nevertheless, those days would be both the past and the present, if the Gospel had acquired universal dominion. The Millennium, with all that beauty and brilliancy which Scriptural images throw round this season of blessedness, is nothing but Christianity pervading all the homes, and grained into all the hearts, of the children of men. If, wheresoever nominally received, Christianity had been received into the hearts of a people, there would have been comparatively banished from the circles of that community, all that ministers to public inquietude or private unhappiness. Fill a country with true Christians, and you necessarily fill it with those who wish each other's good, and bear each other's burdens. You exile from that country, the wrongs and jealousies and divisions which keep society ever agitated; and introduce that deep

and permanent tranquillity, which can only subsist where the fear of God has stilled those countless under-currents which, if you could dive, you would now find beneath the smoothest surface.

So that angels did but proclaim what Christianity was designed and fitted to produce, when, on the birth-night of Him who came to restore us to the enjoyment of the good-will of God, they made the firmament ring with the announcement, that now there was peace upon earth. Peace has not, indeed, followed; and angels, as they behold how discord and trouble overspread the redeemed earth, may marvel that the prophecy, if such it may be called, which they uttered to the shepherds at Bethlehem, should have been only so partially fulfilled. But this has resulted from nothing but the antipathy and resistance of our nature to a religion which demands self-denial and holiness. Angels, it may be, did not reckon on such antipathy and resistance. They may have thought,—and on this persuasion they may have woven their chorus,—that all enmity would give way before so touching a demonstration of divine love, as that of God's sending his own Son to die for man's sins. They sang of peace upon earth: for as salvation itself had not come within their discovery, neither had its possible rejection by the great mass of its objects. Oh! it may not have seemed more insupposable to angels, that men could be redeemed, than that, if redeemed, they could throw back with scorn the mercy God proffered. And, therefore, there is to us something wonderfully affecting in the circumstance, that angels sang of that as immediate, which, alas! even yet we cannot point to as produced. It is as though angels had thought man less obdurate, less wedded to iniquity, less in love with ruin, than experience has proved him. Angels could not think, that with here and there a few exceptions, those for whom Christ died would despise and reject Him; and therefore did they sing of instant peace, never calculating, that, through human indifference and infidelity, centuries of conflict and misery would yet roll heavily over men. They supposed that the wretched would be willing to be made happy, and the sinking to be rescued, and the lost to be

saved: and hence their chorus of "peace on earth, good-will towards men." Oh! they had not been able to discover that Jesus would die; could they, then, discover the alone greater marvel, that He would be crucified afresh, and put to open shame, by thousands upon thousands in every generation?

Such, then, is that Gospel, thus honorable to God and beneficial to man which is henceforward to be stately preached within these walls. This building has been reared and consecrated on purpose for the solemn gatherings of the people, when they shall assemble to worship God in the manner which this Gospel prescribes, to be instructed in the truths which it unfolds, and to partake of the sacraments which it instituted. And though I am but a stranger amongst you, I do heartily rejoice that another sanctuary has now been provided, in which the inhabitants—especially the poorer—of this important and ever-growing town may enjoy the ministrations of Christianity. It is a noble and refreshing spectacle which this town presents: nowhere has there been a finer effort at church extension; but if the actually poor population be little short of twenty thousand, and if the free-sittings provided by the Establishment be much short of six, it is but too evident how greatly this additional church was needed, and how great a deficiency even this will still leave. You are thus applying the only true remedy to those growing disorders which excite the alarm of every lover of God and of man. We may confidently assert, basing our statement on what may be called the ecclesiastical statistics of England and Scotland, that, in exact proportion that the parochial economy has been adequate to the wants of a district, has that district been the seat of virtue, loyalty, and happiness; and that, wherever a church has been planted in the midst of a neglected and dissolute neighborhood, and furnished with an active, self-denying minister, there has been rapidly effected a great change for the better; as though all that is needed to the reclaiming the moral waste produced by the neglect of past years, were the breaking our parishes into manageable portions, and giving to each its sanctuary and its pastor. Neither is there any reason

why we should feel surprised at such result. The Christian religion, working through the ordinances of the Christian Church, is the appointed instrument for converting the wilderness into the garden, and preserving the verdure once produced. What marvel, then, if a dearth of these ordinances have been followed by luxuriant growth in crime, and their comparative abundance by the cheering exhibition of virtuous, well-conditioned families?

We do, therefore, heartily rejoice in every addition to the sanctuaries of the Established Church; more particularly when, as in the present instance, a large share of the increased accommodation is given up to the poor. I know not what may be the precise condition of the poor in this town; but I know what it is in many other places. I know that we are reaping the bitter fruits of long and criminal neglect, in the growth of infidelity amongst the lower orders,—infidelity under a new name, but with even more than its old hatefulness and destructiveness; so that if we do not set ourselves vigorously to work, diffusing with all carefulness and industry the pure Gospel of Christ, we are menaced with the being surrounded by a godless population, which shall cast its derision on all that is sacred in faith, and a blight on all that is lovely in our homes. And it is the business of the Established Church to meet this emergence: it is her office: and she must not delegate it to other hands, even if other hands were ready to undertake it. For our own part, we do not see that an Establishment fulfils its high calling, until it offers the means of religious instruction to all in the land. And we have a thorough persuasion that, if its offers were thus equal to the demand, there would not be found many who would seek elsewhere for the public means of grace. The want of church-room has made its thousands of dissenters, where objection to the Church services has made one. We say this with as much of sorrow as of confidence. For it is cause of pungent regret, that our Establishment has been so deficient in a power of expansion, that not only have thousands been left in utter ignorance, but thousands more have been driven to the conventicle, who would never have been guilty of schism, had the Church ex-

tended to them the benefits of her ministry.

And it may, or it may not, accord with the spirit of the age, to speak of schism as a sin: but God forbid that the Church should shrink from asserting her authority—an authority derived, not from the being established, but from the being apostolical—and which makes it no light, no indifferent thing, to separate from her communion, and to set up teachers who, however distinguished by personal piety, and however eminent in scriptural knowledge, want what we must hold to be indispensable to the office they assume, the appointment of God conveyed through the primitive and unadulterated channels. Assailed as an establishment, these are days in which our Church must boldly declare herself apostolical. You may strip her of her temporalities, you may deprive her of the support of the state—but she denies that you can take from her what makes her the Church. The state might establish any sect it pleased, or it might brand itself with an infidel brand by refusing to have anything to do with the support of Christianity; but the established sect would be as far off as ever from being an apostolical Church, whilst the discarded Church would be as far off as ever from surrendering its apostolical character.—Therefore, let it never be thought, when the Church vehemently resists the dissolution of the connexion between herself and the state, that the resistance proceeds from a feeling, that in ceasing to be established we should cease to be the Church. We feel indeed that it would be a suicidal act on the part of the state, to sever itself from the Church, and thus abjure all care of Christianity. We can never believe that God hath anointed princes, and given the sceptre to potentates, on purpose merely that they may maintain public order, foster commerce, and defend the rights of property. This is a part, but only a small part of their office—a king is the vicegerent of Deity, and Deity, from his very nature, must legislate for eternity. We reckon, therefore, the religious instruction of the people as the most sacred of the duties which devolve upon legislators; and we protest against a government's throwing off the most solemn of its obligations, and thus bringing on a land the withering frown of the

Almighty's displeasure. But, nevertheless, the Church has in her the elements of strength, and would live by herself; whilst the state, by dissociating itself from religion, would have written apostate on its forehead: and, in ridding itself of what some dare to call an incubus, would have thrown overboard the ballast, which, inasmuch as it is a national recognition of subjection to Christ, has steadied the kingdom in many fierce hurricanes of political convulsion.

We cannot, however, enlarge further on these and similar topics, which are naturally suggested by the occasion of our assembling. We have only again to express the delight which we feel that a church has now been opened for numbers who could otherwise have had no access to the authorized ministrations of the Christian religion. We rejoice in the expectation that within these walls will many assemble to confess sin, to cry for mercy, and to chaunt the praises of their Creator and Redeemer. Here will they "receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls." Here will they kneel in deep humility, and partake by faith of the body and blood of the Lord. Hither—of course we speak only of the uses of the structure, without reference to what may be, in the present instance, the parochial arrangements—hither will come those who desire to be joined in the union which typifies that between Christ and his Church—the legislature may permit a Christian population to make marriage a civil contract; but a Christian population will spurn the permission, and form no where but in God's house that sacred alliance, so mysteriously significant. Hither will infants be brought, that they may be regenerated in the waters of baptism: Christian parents know that the law of the land may be satisfied if they insert in an office-book the birth-day and name of a child, but that the law of Christ is fatally set at nought, unless the priest baptize that child "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And to the gates of this building may wind the sorrowing train that accompanies a brother, or a sister, to the long home appointed for our race. Within these walls, and over the cold relics of the dead, may be heard the sublime challenge, "O Death, where is

thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" and mourners shall dry their tears, and commit a beloved one to the dust, in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. Thus may this building become associated with the joys and sorrows of the surrounding population, with the marriages, and the births, and the funerals; haunted by rich memories as well as splendid hopes—the place which is most peopled to recollection with what has been interesting in life, and to expectation with what is brilliant in eternity. O, the parish church, and the parish minister—the one is the structure which most awakens emotions in a wanderer's breast, after long years of absence, as though it were the gathering-place for all the charities of the heart; and the other so winds himself, by his office, into the histories of those amongst whom he ministers, that he becomes, unconsciously, a memento of the past, and may use the influence which this gives in leading onwards to the future.

That the Almighty God may fill this Church with his presence, and cause his blessing to rest abundantly on him who is to minister therein, is and will be my earnest petition. I must always feel as though associated by no common ties with a church, in which mine was the first voice to take up, however feebly, the angelic proclamation, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

And to whom out of the honored list of apostles and saints do ye dedicate this structure? To St. John the Evangelist. Then let the evangelist preach to you ere ye depart. "Whosoever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The poor are appealing to you: there is yet a considerable sum required, ere this church can permanently secure to the poor the blessings of a stated ministry; and will you be slack in preventing such anomaly as that, on the day of the opening of the church of St. John the Evangelist, there should be no display of the love which was this evangelist's special characteristic?

We appeal to the inhabitants of the town: they are urged by every possible motive: this church is erected for their

fellow-parishioners, whose condition they cannot improve without improving their own, whom they cannot neglect without bringing themselves in a measure under the anathema of St. Paul, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." We appeal to the visitors, if such there be present, those who are sojourning here for health or recreation. I always feel as if we owed a large debt to the destitute of places to which we resort, when worn with sickness, or wearied with toil. We ought not to be gladdened by their landscapes, without striving in return to scatter the precious seed of God's Word. I feel as if the dwellers in the Alps and Pyrenees had a claim upon me for the glorious lessons in the magnificence of the Creator which have been given me in their fastnesses. I feel as if the Norwegian might call upon me to pay thankfully for the notices of divinity which have been thrown to me from his mighty pinnacles, his vast forests, his everlasting snows, his rushing cataracts. And I cannot tread the romantic parts of our own fair land, and not feel that its wild and beautiful scenes, its tangled glens, its sunny hills, its sparkling waters, summon us not to show ourselves ungrateful for the having gazed on its pictures, but to strive, in return, that the inhabitants may be all led to the river of life, to the garden of the Lord. And ye come hither to draw health from the waters of the great deep,

to awe and enchant yourselves with gazing on that sublime image of the Eternal One, glorious and wonderful, whether the skies glass their azure in its unruffled mirror, or the tempest have lashed it into madness. Will you enjoy the sea, and care nothing whether those who inhabit its shores know, or know not, of the "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil?" Again, we bring against you the evangelist to whom you have dedicated this church. We are told by St. John, that in the new heavens, and the new earth, there shall be "no more sea." The sea remains till the general judgment, gives up its dead, and then disappears from the renovated system. Yet ere it departs, it may combine with the rest of creation in witnessing against us. The sun shall witness, if we have abused the brilliant daylight to works of iniquity. The darkness shall witness, if we have employed its mantle to shroud wickedness. The corn and the wine shall witness, if we have indulged inordinately our appetites. The gold shall witness, if hoarded avariciously, or squandered profligately. And the sea shall witness, witness with its roaring thunders, and its crested billows, if we have enjoyed its beauty and its blessing, and done nothing to gird its shores with the rock of ages, to plant the cliffs against which it breaks with those spires which often serve as landmarks to the mariner on its surface, whilst they point him moreover to a haven of everlasting rest.

S E R M O N V I I .

THE WORD IN SEASON.

* The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."—ISAIAH L. 4.

It is generally admitted, that the speaker of these words is the Messiah, the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, who anticipated, as it were, his assuming our nature, and spake as though He had already appeared in the flesh. The chapter commences with an address from Jehovah Himself: "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" The address, you observe, is in the first person—Jehovah Himself speaks, not the prophet in his name. And since this form of address is continued throughout the chapter, there being no discoverable change in the party who speaks, we must conclude that it is Jehovah who gives utterance to our text, however inappropriate, at first, the words may seem to a person of the Godhead.

But if the speaker be Jehovah, He must evidently be Jehovah in some very peculiar position and character; for not only does He represent Himself in our text as a scholar—and even this appears incongruous with Deity—but He goes on to represent Himself as a sufferer, a sufferer in no ordinary measure. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." If you took away all knowledge of the scheme of our redemption, it would be utterly in-

explicable how, in a chapter where there is no change of person, it should be said in one part, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering;" and in another, "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." But all difficulty vanishes, when we have in our hands the history of a being who is described as "over all, God blessed for ever,"* as "the Word" that "was in the beginning with God,"† and that "was God," and of whom nevertheless we find it recorded, "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands."‡ There is no such book of contradictions as the Bible, if there be no person who is both human and divine. Nothing but such a combination will make sense of the Bible, or rescue it from containing a vast mass of inconsistencies. Some may think that it would simplify the Christian theology, to remove from it the mystery that two natures coalesced in the one person of Christ. But as the divinity of our Lord is the foundation of our hope, so is it the key to the Bible: we acknowledge reverently a great mystery, but not the thousandth part as great as the whole Bible becomes on the supposition that Christ was only man.

We shall assume, therefore, throughout our discourse, that the being who speaks in our text is the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity; and that He speaks in that character of a mediator which He had covenanted from all

* Preached at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, St. Paul's Cathedral, 1844.

* Rom. ix. 5. † St. John i. 2. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 67

eternity to bear, and which required that, in "the fulness of time," He should be made flesh, and dwell amongst men. It may indeed seem strange that a person of the Godhead should speak of Himself in the terms here employed, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned: he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." These expressions appear to belong to a being who is purely a recipient, who depends on some higher being for power and instruction: can they then be appropriate to one in whom dwelleth all fulness, who, in place of requiring to have knowledge communicated, is Himself none other than the Omniscient? Certainly not, if there be no capacity in which we may regard Christ but that of a person of the Godhead. Survey Him however in his capacity of Mediator—a capacity in which, as man, He was progressive in wisdom, and in which He had to seek and obtain supplies of strength from above—and such expressions are every way applicable: undoubtedly they set Him before us as "inferior to the Father;" but we are as ready to confess Him "inferior to the Father as touching his manhood," as we are earnest to maintain Him "equal to the Father as touching his Godhead."

But when it has been affirmed that the expression in our text, though denoting inferiority in office, is not necessarily at variance with the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, we may acknowledge that the language here employed of Himself by the Redeemer, is such as perhaps we could hardly have expected. We refer now to that process of instruction which is so emphatically described, the Son being represented as the pupil or scholar of the Father, and the teaching being spoken of as unwearied and continual. "He wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." There is here portrayed a course of education: the Lord God resumes every day the lessons which were to qualify the Son for his office: in so brief a description, you could not have the figures more strikingly displayed of a teacher most earnest in giving, and of a scholar as earnest in receiving instruction. But the assertion of St. Luke is evidence enough that a delineation such as this is not inappropriate to the Lord our Redeemer. "And Jesus increased

in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."* This assertion is remarkable. It not only puts Christ, in certain great respects, on a par with ourselves—for by speaking of growth both in wisdom and stature, the Evangelist represents the soul, like the body, as in advancement or progress—but by stating that He grew "in favor with God and man," it would seem to indicate that there was an ever-increasing conformity on the part of the Mediator to the will of the Father. Not, of course, that at any time could Christ have been reluctant to do God's will. But this will may have been only gradually disclosed, and, as fast as disclosed, consented to by Christ. Who can tell us how the man Christ Jesus became informed, as He grew up, of the nature of the mediatorial office? how, as He advanced from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to manhood, He acquired greater knowledge as to the business of his mission, and deepened in resolution to do the will of his Father? But, in the very expressive language of the text, God may have "wakened him morning by morning." Day by day, so soon as there was intelligence enough in the child to receive such stupendous communications, did the Lord God, we may believe, impart information as to the purposes for which He had been born; so that the child "grew in wisdom," not only because, like other children, He grew in acquaintance with ordinary things, but especially because He acquired understanding of that vast scheme of deliverance which the wisdom of God had from all eternity devised. It were presumption, or worse, to inquire in what degrees, or by what successive steps, the instruction was given; or at what time in his life the man Christ Jesus became aware of all the endurance that would be required of Him in the mediatorial work. But our text seems to forbid doubt that the communications were gradual, so that, morning by morning, was something new told, till at last the whole task of labor, ignominy, and death, lay spread before the view of the Surety of our race. What lessons were these which, day by day, the Saviour wakened to receive? lessons as to the lost condition of man, the dreadfulness of Divine wrath,

* Luke ii. 52.

the fearful immenseness of the undertaking proposed to Him as a substitute for sinners. And He shrunk not as these lessons were given—"The Lord God hath opened mine ear; and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back."*

But over and above the instruction of Christ in the nature of the mediatorial work, we may believe that God wakened Him morning by morning, in order that He might have those "treasures of wisdom and knowledge," which were to fit Him for the great office of teacher of the nations. The Spirit was given to Him without measure; and none can doubt that, during the many years which our Lord passed in retirement, this Divine agent was gradually preparing Him to speak as never man spake, to deliver utterances which should scatter the darkness of ages, and pour a flood of light over the duties and destinies of our race. You have this, in fact, asserted in the text; for not only is a process of instruction there attributed to God, but the result of that process is unequivocally alleged, in that God is said to have given unto Christ "the tongue of the learned." "The tongue of the learned!"—I imagine myself placed in the world at the time when the Christ was expected, commissioned to announce to it that God was about to send his own Son, having endowed Him with "the tongue of the learned." What excitement in all the schools of philosophy! what gatherings of the sages of the earth! what expectations of the discoveries with which science was about to be enriched! Now, say they, shall long-hidden secrets be revealed: now shall we understand the motions of stars: now shall we penetrate the laboratories of nature, and observe all those processes of which, at present, we see only the results. For what purpose can "the tongue of the learned" have been given to a Divine person, if not that He may expound mysteries to the world, that He may tell us what the wise have been unable to detect, and the studious labored in vain to unfold?

But this Divine person shall speak for Himself to the assembled throng of philosophers and sages. Yes, "the Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned;" and I have descended that I might speak with that tongue to

every nation of the earth. But He hath not given me the tongue, that I might tell how stars and planets roll. He hath not given it me, that I might settle the disputes of the wise, that I might solve the curious questions propounded in your academies, and clear the paradoxes in which you are entangled. He hath given me the tongue, not that I should know how to speak a word to you, ye "disputers of this world;" nor to you, ye diligent students of the wonders of the universe, whose marchings are on the firmament, and whose searchings into the depths; but simply "that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Oh, how fallen are the expectant countenances of philosophers and sages! Is this all? they exclaim. Was it only for this that "the tongue of the learned" was bestowed? Does this require, or can this employ, "the tongue of the learned?"

Nay, men of science, turn not angrily away. With all your wisdom you have never been able to do this. The weary have sought to you in vain. They have found no "word in season," no word of comfort and sustainment; and why then should you be indignant at the province here assigned to "the tongue of the learned?" There is no better description to be given of the world, under a moral point of view, at the time when the Redeemer appeared, than is contained in the one emphatic word "weary." The Gentiles were "weary" with fruitless searchings after truth; the Jews were "weary" with long expectings of the Christ. In vain had reason striven to form some definite conception of man's position with reference to God, of his future condition, of his possibilities of acceptance and happiness. Truth had evaded inquiry; and the "weary," unable to abstain altogether from the search, grew fainter and fainter, disgusted with a philosophy which did but perplex, and darkened by speculations which ended in conjecture when certainty was sought. And even where there was the knowledge of a promised deliverer, it might be said, in the wise man's words, that "hope deferred had made the heart sick;"* so long had the Redeemer been looked for by the faithful, that they were almost tempted

* Isaiah 1. 5.

* Prov. xiii. 12.

to ask whether God had not indeed "forgotten to be gracious?"*

And what tongue but "the tongue of the learned" could speak "a word in season," to a world oppressed with this universal weariness? The tongue must be one which could disclose the mysteries of Godhead, mysteries immeasurably transcending those of stars in their courses. It must be one which could prove the immortality of the soul, a truth debated by the most skilful philosophers, and left undetermined. It must be charged with intelligence as to the pardon of sin, as to a mode of reconciliation between man and his Maker, things into which even angels had in vain striven to look—no marvel then if the best of human reasoners had reached no conclusion, unless one which consigned to despair. And this tongue moreover must be able to expound ancient Scriptures, to illustrate the writings of Moses and the Prophets, which Scribes and Pharisees, the sages of the land, had not so much rendered plain, as shown to be difficult. Did not then "the weary" require "the tongue of the learned;" could any tongue but "the tongue of the learned" have addressed them with seasonable words? Indeed it was not human learning which could have clothed the tongue with appropriate speech. But this only magnifies the learning, showing that it must be derived from a higher than any earthly school, even from a heavenly instructor.

And yet there is no reason why the throng of sages and philosophers should go away disappointed at finding for what purpose "the tongue of the learned" would be used. They too were "weary," not less weary with searching after truth in other departments, than with inquiring after it in regard to religion. And if the Mediator did not come purposely to relieve this weariness, it has happened that his "word in season" to man, as an immortal, accountable being, has been a "word in season" to him as a rational and thinking—every science having seemed to flourish through contact with Christianity, and reason having been strengthened by revelation, whether received or rejected. So that, whilst we do not say that in claiming for Himself "the tongue of

the learned," Christ designed to use the word "learned" in its ordinary acceptation, we may safely affirm that his tongue has been practically that which has shed abroad knowledge. He spake not with the tongue of the philosopher; but, as though all philosophy were embodied in Christianity. He could not speak of the kingdom of heaven as opened, without opening to the gaze of science the mighty fields of space: He could not speak of death as abolished, without abolishing the delusions which had imposed themselves upon reason for truths: He could not speak of man as freed from the curse, without freeing his mind from shackles, and giving it to range through earth, sea, air. Then there was no need that any class should depart disappointed, when the Redeemer announced the office, in order to fit Him for which the Lord God had wakened Him "morning by morning." The "weary," to whom He specially came, were indeed those on whom was heavily pressing the felt burden of sin. But the whole creation was groaning and travailing in pain. Every where there was mistake, or deceit, or fruitless inquiry, or disappointed hope. Weariness was on all hands, on all pursuits—the man of science, whom truth seemed perpetually to elude; the man of pleasure, who found nothing that could satisfy; the man of ambition, who chased shadows for substances—weariness was upon them all. And the "word in season" was unto them all—a word which, like that originally uttered by God, seemed to make all things new, for it laid open the universe, if it did not create; a word which gave to human desire things even richer than it could compass; a word which crowded eternity with palaces and thrones; not phantoms, but realities. Oh, why might not every tribe and every individual upon the earth, have joined in one thankful confession, that unto Christ had been given "the tongue of the learned," and that too for the express purpose in each separate case, that He might "know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary?"

But let us confine ourselves especially to those cases of weariness which must have been primarily referred to by Christ, cases to which, when He came to the accomplishment of his office, He addressed the beautiful words, Come

* Ps. lxxvii. 9.

unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Is there any suitableness to these cases in "the tongue of the learned?" was there room for the exercise of such a tongue, or was such a tongue needed, when there was nothing to be done but the speaking "a word in season" to parties thus burdened? This is a point well deserving attention. The "tongue of the learned" might seem to be called for, if there were knotty questions to settle, or thorny controversies to reconcile; but what will it find to do where conscience is ill at ease, or the heart wrung with sorrow? Indeed, if you take learning in its ordinary sense, if you were to send what is commonly called a learned man, and in his capacity of a learned man, to the terrified sinner, or the weeping mourner, it is likely that he would be quite out of place, that all his science would fail to supply the "word in season." And, nevertheless, there is a learning which is needed, a deep acquaintance with the heart and its workings, a thorough knowledge of the springs and sources of moral disquietude, and as thorough a knowledge of the remedies provided by God. They are vastly mistaken who think, that then only is a man showing himself "learned," when he is bringing forth the stores of a ponderous erudition, quoting classical authors, adducing historical facts, or explaining natural phenomena. In the cottages of the poor, where there are consciences to be probed, and cares to be soothed, he may be as much applying the results of long study, and using riches accumulated in memory, as when he carries on a controversy, employing the weapons, and displaying the resources, of a most accomplished scholarship. There is no volume so obscure, none so full of deep and dark things, as the human heart; and he must be well read in this volume, who would "speak a word in season." It is easy enough to speak a word out of season, to cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace,"† to apply Scriptural promises before the conscience is sufficiently probed, and even to withhold them when the time for healing has come—but "the word in season," the suitable truth at the suit-

able time, the message which shall exactly meet the case, and vary with its every variation, "the tongue of the learned" can alone deliver this, and the Lord God alone can bestow that tongue.

But how precisely did Christ fulfil the prophetic description; how truly was his tongue the "tongue of the learned," in that it spake the "word in season" to the weary. "He knew what was in man:"* He needed not that any should teach Him: his acquaintance with all the windings and depths of the heart was such as could not have been obtained by any finite understanding. And He so adapted his discourse to these windings and depths, that He left no case unprovided for, but with a wonderful skill delivered a seasonable word for every instance of weariness. He was "learned," in that his comprehensive knowledge took in all the possible varieties of human want; he was "learned," in that this knowledge embraced also the appropriate supply for each of these varieties. And "the tongue of the learned" was employed when, whether by his own mouth, or by that of those whom He commissioned to teach, utterances were delivered which have served, and will serve to the very end of time, to furnish to all cases of weariness a precise "word in season." It is one of the standing witnesses to the Divine origin of Scripture, or, which is nearly the same, to the Divine mission of Christ, that the Bible, though not a large book, contains something adapted to every possible case; so that no one can go in faith and humility to that volume, and not find it like an oracle whence come the responses of God; or like the high priest, in the glorious days of Jerusalem, on whose breastplate the Urim and the Thummim gave revelation of the mind of Jehovah. We cite "the weary and heavy laden" as witnesses to this. Is there the grief, is there the care, for the one of which there is nothing alleviating in Scripture, or for the other nothing soothing? What tear is there which might not be dried, what sigh which might not be hushed, if, in place of having recourse to the enchantments of the world, men would betake themselves to the Bible, and seek there for consolation in the midst of their troubles? Is

* Matt. xi. 23.

† Jer. vi. 14.

* John ii. 25.

the weariness that of one who sits down oppressed with multiplied anxieties? how reasonable is the word, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you,"* or this that was spoken personally by Him who had "the tongue of the learned," "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith."† Is the weariness that resulting from disappointed expectations? what "a word in season" is there here! "God hath begotten you again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."‡ Is the man "weary" with the loss of friend after friend, "weary" in that the grave seems insatiable, and continually demands fresh victims from amongst those whom he loves? There are many "words in season" for such an one as this: "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,"§ might have seemed spoken on purpose for him; and had he been personally, he could not have been more appropriately addressed than in the admonition of the Apostle, "I 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."|| Or is the weariness not so much that of one oppressed with losses, as of one distressed with apprehensions, before whom the future seems dark, and round whom dangers are gathering? O what "words in season" are there here—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;"¶ "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."** And let a man feel "weary" as a sinner, "weary" under the load of guilt, original and actual, "weary" with devising methods of his own for turning away the wrath which transgression must provoke; and then will "the tongue of the learned" address him in

language which shall accomplish the saying, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."* It were vain to send him to Natural Theology, which cannot tell him of a propitiation for sin. It were vain to refer him to those who are counted "the learned" of the earth; for "the disputers of this world" have left unsolved, and almost unattempted, the question, "How should man be just with God?"† But refer him, in this his weariness, to Jesus, the "one Mediator between God and men,"‡ who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,"§ and presently he will exclaim with Solomon, "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"|| Knowing himself condemned, how reasonable will be the word, "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree;"¶ conscious of inability to work out a perfect righteousness of his own, how much in season must be the saying, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."***

But in order that the "word in season" may be applied to the several cases, Christ has been pleased to appoint an order of men in his Church, whose special office it shall be to handle and enforce the blessed truths of his Gospel. The business of the clergyman is that of speaking "a word in season" to the weary, and verily he needs the "tongue of the learned," that he may perform so varied and intricate a duty. Rightly to "divide the word of truth," to avoid, as we before said, the speaking "peace where there is no peace," and to speak it at the right moment; to wield the threatenings and apply the promises of Scripture.—"Who is sufficient for these things?" indeed there is required "the tongue of the learned;" and though human education will do much, so much that what is commonly called "learning," is not only advantageous, but indispensable, to the priesthood in their dealings with the sinful and the sorrowing, God alone can make the clergyman duly skilful and faithful. It is no light thing to have in any measure the charge of the souls of our fellow-men; and often will the Christian

* 1 Pet. v. 7.

† Matt. vi. 30.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 4.

§ Prov. xviii. 24.

|| 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

¶ Isaiah xliii. 2.

** Psalm xlvi. 14.

* Prov. xxv. 25.

† Job ix. 2.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

§ Heb. ix. 26.

|| Prov. xv. 23. ¶ 1 Pet. ii. 24. *** Rom. x. 4.

minister almost sink beneath the burden, feeling that it would indeed be insupportable, were it not for such "a word in season" as this, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."*

Alas, that the burden should often be aggravated; that, harrassed by spectacles of distress which have met him in his parochial rounds, saddened by the plaints of the widow, and by the sighs of the orphan, he should have to think how, but too possibly, he may leave his own wife to similar destitution, and bequeath the like poverty to his own children! Nay but, O thou who art faithfully doing "the work of an evangelist,"† there is "a word in season" for such forebodings as these—"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."‡ Neither is the minister thrown altogether on his faith, when he would draw comfort from words such as these. He can see the promise fulfilled in the experience of the families of many of his brethren who have sunk into the grave after years of laborious usefulness. Kind friends have arisen to minister to the wants of the widow, and to provide for the orphan, stimulated by the feeling that a life of devotedness at the Christian altar entails a debt of gratitude on a Christian people. Not, however, that it can yet be said that this feeling has sufficiently shown itself in practical results. The life of devotedness indeed is signally and increasingly exhibited. They may talk of what is heroic and disinterested, and fetch their illustrations from the boastful annals of the brave and the bountiful—but the man of high intellectual endowment, of varied erudition, of powers which, employed on secular pursuits, could hardly have failed to command distinction and wealth—this man, consecrating himself to some obscure and poverty-stricken district, contented to wear away life in endeavors at carrying home the Gospel to the inmates of the courts and alleys of a degraded and dissolute neighborhood, and that too on a pittance which barely suffices to keep off penury from his household whilst he lives, and fastens it on it inevitably when he dies; nay, we can thank God that the ranks of the Chris-

tian ministry are continually furnishing such spectacles as this; but we claim for them the giving dignity to our times; we declare of them that they leave hopelessly behind what philosophy ever taught, or chivalry achieved. The days of martyrs and confessors have not departed: amid the hovels of the starving, and at the bedsides of the dying, there is now the like devotedness to the cause of Christ crucified, ay, and as thorough, and as prodigal, an abandonment of self, and an embracing of what the world counts affliction, as when, in times of fierce persecution, pure religion brought men to the scaffold and the axe. I dare not say that it is well, that in a country of unrivalled opulence, and in times when God hath given to that country magnificent empire, and mighty resources, there should be the multiplication of inconsiderable endowments, as though that were thought enough for the maintenance of a clergyman, which would barely suffice for that of an artizan. But it is well, it goes far towards redeeming the character of the age from the ignoble and the selfish, that numbers are ready, on endowments so scanty, to undertake the office of ministering to the poor.

This, however, only heightens the probability that many, now laboring in the ministry, will leave their widows and orphans in a condition of dependence, not to say destitution. And you are to endeavor to provide against this contingency. You are not only to extend to the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy such support as it has been accustomed to receive; you are entreated greatly to increase that support, to increase it not only by present contributions, but by liberal annual subscriptions. If small benefices are to be multiplied, the funds of this Corporation must be greatly increased, else will there be a spectacle in the land which cannot fail to draw upon it the indignation of the Lord; the spectacle of many families grappling with actual want, the families of men who labored "in season and out of season," that they might win souls to Christ; who counted not their lives dear to them, if so be they might bless their country—oh, talk not of mere patriotism in comparison of this—bless their country by evangelizing their countrymen.

* Ps. lv. 22. † 2 Tim. iv. 5. ‡ Jer. xlix. 11.

It is true that this Festival of the Sons of the Clergy is not celebrated, as have been those of preceding years. There is not the same departure from the ordinary service of the cathedral; for it has been wisely judged that the pomp of an orchestra is too dearly purchased by the suspension of daily prayer, and that the organ's solemn swell, as it alone accompanies the morning and evening chant, ought alone to aid you when, on occasions like the present, you meet to praise God, "not only with the lip," but with the hearty consecration of your substance to his cause. Ay, ye have not been enticed hither to-day by instrumental melody; but ye have come at a better summons; ye have heard, in the hours of private meditation, the voices of those who live only that they may "speak a word in season to the weary;" ye have heard also their prayers, as, unable to provide for those dearest to them on earth, they

have meekly committed them to the care of the Almighty. And ye have been moved to an earnest resolve that ye will "forsake not the Levite,"* as long as ye live upon the earth; that ye will forsake him not in the persons of the widow and the orphan. Ye have come hither to announce and act on this resolve—oh, better than to have come to listen to "the cornet and harp, and dulcimer and flute;" ye have come to provide, that from burdened hearts, and stricken spirits, there shall rise the notes of gratitude and praise—"the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."†

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end Amen."

S E R M O N V I I I . †

CHURCH BUILDING.

* Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cield houses, and this house lie waste?—HAGGAI I. 3, 4.

Very few words will be needed, to put you in possession of the force and bearing of this passage, as originally delivered. The Jews had but lately returned, in virtue of the decree of Cyrus in their favor, from their captivity of seventy years in Babylon, to which they had been sentenced for their own sins and those of their fathers. Very shortly after their return, they had commenced the rebuilding of the tem-

ple, applying themselves to it as the most important work, like men who were conscious that Jerusalem could have no glory, until it again possessed the sanctuary of the Lord. But opposition soon arose: the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin sought to thwart the design, and applied to the court of Persia for authority to put a stop to the building. This was obtained; and we read in the Book of Ezra, "Then ceased the work of the house of God, which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia."

It was in this year, as we learn from

* Deut. xii. 19. † Job xxix. 13.

† Preached at Camden Chapel, after reading the Queen's Letter of 1839, on behalf of the Society for rebuilding and repairing Churches.

the opening words of his prophecy, that Haggai was directed to address the message, of which our text is a part, to the Jews generally, but especially to Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest, persons who, from station and influence, ought to have been earnest in endeavors to promote the rebuilding of the temple, though they would seem to have been chargeable with some measure of remissness. It may not have been altogether a matter of choice with the Jews, whether they should cease from the building, when the decree against them had been obtained by their enemies. It is possible, however, that they were too ready in yielding, having, perhaps, been secretly not displeased at an excuse for desisting from an expensive and laborious undertaking. We may gather this from observing the terms of the decree: for it was generally the building of the city, and not particularly that of the temple, which was prohibited by Artaxerxes. "Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me." But it does not appear that the Jews so complied with this decree, as to suspend the building of the city; though, as is expressly recorded, they left off working at the house of the Lord. We gather sufficiently from our text that they had persisted in building dwellings for themselves, though no progress had been made with the temple; and we can hardly therefore doubt that they had suffered themselves to be unnecessarily deterred from a work which they were bound to have prosecuted in preference to every other.

But however the case may have stood immediately on the issuing of the decree, it is certain that afterwards the Jews made frivolous excuses for not proceeding with the temple, and manifested a reluctance which was adapted to provoke the fierce anger of God. It was on this account that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up: the chief object of their mission was to rouse the people to the long-neglected work, to reprove the indolent, and encourage the desponding. You learn from the verse preceeding our text, that the common excuse was that the time had not arrived at which the building of the

temple could be advantageously undertaken. "This people say, The time is not yet come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." No doubt the Jews argued, that, harassed as they were by enemies, straitened in resources, and still dwelling among ruins, they were in no condition to rear a structure which should be worthy to succeed the temple of Solomon. They probably made the magnificence of the former sanctuary a reason for delaying the work, and plausibly stated, that until national affairs were a little more settled, it would not be possible for them to rebuild the temple with adequate splendor. But, all the while, they were not only building themselves houses, but sumptuous houses—as the expression "ciled houses," which is used in our text, may be considered to denote. And this was enough to convict them of disinclination to the work of building the temple, and to show that their excuses, like those commonly of men who defer religious duties to more convenient seasons, were but marks of a secret resolve to escape, if possible, altogether from a labor which must interfere with more congenial pursuits.

Our text contains the abrupt and indignant expostulation with which the prophet was directed to meet the excuse as to the time not being come for building the Lord's house. It gives force to the expostulation, and it is indeed almost required by its terms, that we should suppose the messenger of God planting himself in the midst of Jerusalem; houses, which were almost palaces, rising on the one side, whilst on the other were the foundations of the temple, just discernible amid the ruins which still proclaimed how fierce had been the vengeance which the Chaldeans were commissioned to execute. The prophet looks reproachfully on the rulers and people, as they hurry to and fro in their several pursuits, caring nothing, as it seemed, for the desolation of the sanctuary. They guess what is passing in his mind: they cannot fail to interpret his meaning, as he gazes on the fragments of the once glorious temple, and then turns towards them with an air expressive of mingled sorrow and anger. They approach him in the hope of softening his feelings; for they know his high commission, and would rather obtain his approval than endure his re-

buke. They plead that the time is not come. Far be it from them to deny that the temple ought to be rebuilt: they not only confess it, but quite intend to undertake the work, when they shall be so circumstanced as to have a prospect of undertaking it with success. Wait a while, they seem to say to the prophet: you do us wrong in suspecting that it is through our indisposition or sloth, that no progress has been made with the house of the Lord: a fit season has not yet arrived; but when it comes, you shall find us all zeal and alacrity. I mark the prophet: the Spirit of the Lord is striving within him; and he seems to gather his strength for one indignant and overwhelming reply. He points with the one hand to structures, many of them completed, others in progress, but all betokening opulence; and with the other to heaps of ruins, which there had scarce been an effort to remove. The former are the residences of the men who are pleading their inability to build the house of the Lord: the latter cover the ground on which a temple ought to have risen. Ah, there is scarcely need that he should speak; the contrast speaks for him: surely the people must have been stricken in conscience, and have shrunk away without waiting for the expression in language of what was so forcible in action. But whether they paused or not to hear the indignant expostulation, there was indeed enough to expose the utter hollowness of their specious excuse, and to prove them wilfully neglectful of the highest of duties, when the prophet, with one hand directed towards their lofty mansions, and with the other towards the dilapidated temple, brake in to the upbraiding and energetic question, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?"

Now you are aware that it is our duty, on the present occasion, in obedience to the Queen's letter, which was read to you last Sunday, to endeavor to excite you to liberal contributions on behalf of the Incorporated Society for the building and enlarging of churches throughout England and Wales. You will judge that we have selected our subject of discourse with reference to the occasion; that we design to draw something of a pallel between our

own circumstances and conduct, and those of the Jews; to endeavor, that is, to derive from our "cieled houses" motives to increased diligence in building the house of the Lord. We shall therefore analyze more minutely the expostulation of the text; for it will perhaps be found to assume or include truths which may be overlooked on a cursory inspection. No doubt there are points of view under which the text is more pertinent, if considered as addressed to the Jews, than when transferred to ourselves, who live beneath a different dispensation. With the Jews it might almost be said that the very existence of their religion depended on their restoring their temple; many of its most important rites and ceremonies could only be performed in the temple: so that, whilst they had no sacred structure, with its chambers and altars and mystic furniture, they were literally incapacitated for offering unto God such services as his law had prescribed. The case is not precisely the same with ourselves: Christianity is not a local religion, like Judaism; its ordinances are not, in the like sense or degree, limited to place; and though undoubtedly the want of a church would materially interfere with the performance of its rites, it would not so debilitate the worshipper as to leave him, like the Jew, unable to approach God in his own appointed way.

But it does not follow from this, that we are less criminal than the Jew, if, through our own indolence or negligence, the house of the Lord lie in any sense waste. It may be one of the gracious results of the change from Judaism to Christianity, from a contracted to a more ample dispensation, that, if we were unavoidably deprived of a church, we should not, on that account, be unavoidably deprived of its ordinances. But this does not show us in the least more excusable, if we ourselves cause the want of a temple. We may be better able than the Jew to do without the temple, when the temple is destroyed, and yet be to the full as blameworthy as the Jew, if it be through our supineness that the temple is not rebuilt. The temple may not be indispensable to the Christian, as it was to the Jew—and this is for our advantage when there is no temple to which

we can go up: but the temple may be valuable to the Christian as well as to the Jew; there may be privileges attached to it, which we have no right to expect elsewhere, so long as we have, or might have, its courts to which to resort—and this is for our condemnation, if we neglect to rear the house of the Lord.

We do not therefore confound our case with that of the Jews, though we are about to address to Christians the expostulation of the text, as if the change in dispensation had made no difference in its pertinence and force. These few remarks will suffice to show that we quite bear in mind the vast difference, so far as the ordinances of religion are concerned, between the Jews with the Temple of Jerusalem in ruins, and ourselves, for example, with all the churches in London burnt down. We undoubtedly might, in a great measure, keep our Sabbaths, offer our prayers, dispense the Sacraments, preach the word, notwithstanding the disastrous and universal conflagration; though not so the Jews, who, in losing the temple, lost well-nigh the power of worshipping God. But the different degrees in which the two would be affected by the loss of the temple, are not to be confounded with different degrees in criminality, if the two be alike negligent in rebuilding the temple. There may be no difference in the latter, whilst there is the greatest in the former. And this having been settled, we may keep the Jews out of sight, and proceed, whenever Christians are to be upbraided for neglecting, or urged to the furthering, the great work of building churches for an augmented population, to ply them with the expostulation of our text, "Is it for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?"

Now we have thankfully admitted that Christianity, unlike Judaism, is not tied to places; that its ordinances may be every where celebrated; so that the wanderers to a distant island may carry the system with them, and plant it as firmly in the new domain as ever Judaism was planted in Jerusalem, though it could not be moved thence to any other city. But now let us consider a little more in detail, what necessity there is, under this new and better covenant, for structures devoted to sacred uses, or

what loss is it to us if "this house lie waste." It hath pleased the Almighty to reveal to our lost world a method of salvation: to send to us the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, which makes known a way in which the guilty may be pardoned, and the alienated reconciled to Himself. In the first instance, this Gospel was published with supernatural evidences, through the ministrations of men who were enabled to prove, through the miracles which they worked, the Divine origin of the doctrines which they taught. And something of this kind might have continued. Supernatural evidences might have all along accompanied the march of Christianity, though, as every one must perceive, these evidences would have needed to be augmented and varied, forasmuch as the miraculous, if frequently repeated, will pass for the natural, and the deviation from a law, if it continually occur, will come to be regarded as itself the law. Or it is quite supposable, that, in place of a general and standing demonstration of the truth of Christianity, God might have appointed a succession of individual revelations; so that, whensoever it pleased Him to make Christ known to a person, there might have been vouchsafed to that person a distinct communication from Heaven, a communication which should have been explicit as to the mode of a sinner's acceptance, and which should have brought with it its evidence that it was verily the word of the Lord.

But it is altogether contrary to the established order of the Providence of God, that miracles should be employed where the result might be accomplished through ordinary means. And we might therefore justly have expected what we find to have been appointed—namely, that the propagation of Divine truth, when once its origin had been sufficiently demonstrated, was left to no supernatural instrumentality; it was entrusted to the Church, furnished as that Church was with the written word, and encouraged to expect the continued aids of the Holy Ghost. This is now the appointed course of things—namely, that the Church, by diffusing the written word, and devoting an order of men to the preaching of the Gospel, is to labor at bringing men into acquaintance with Christ and his doctrine—not that either

the written word, or the preacher, can of itself be effectual to produce conviction and renewal; but that the Spirit of God is pleased to employ this instrumentality, when He would bring men out of darkness into marvellous light.

And there is very little difficulty, when once it has been ascertained that such is the appointed mode for the propagation of truth, in seeing that the public ordinances of religion are indispensable to Christians, even as they were to the Jews. Let the churches of London, as we have already said, be all consumed in one vast conflagration, and you do not put our metropolis into precisely the same state as Jerusalem, with her one temple in ruins. We might meet in private houses; we might turn rooms into sanctuaries; and thus remedy in a measure the grievous disaster—whereas the Jews might not set up altars, except on one spot, not celebrate the mysteries of their faith in any but the one hallowed structure. Suppose however—for here lies the gist of the matter—that the solemn assembly ceased from amongst us; that there were no longer any gathering, whether in dedicated or temporary buildings, for public worship, and the preaching of the Gospel; what would then be our religious condition? would it be better than that of the Jew, with no temple to frequent? We believe that the difference would be practically slight: we have the advantage over the Jew in that we can multiply our places for religious assembling, but not in that we may be deprived of all such places, and yet sustain no real injury. Even those of you who may be counted amongst the righteous, as having been brought to “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” would find the want of the public assembly—private reading of the word would never supply the place of its public preaching, nor secret meditation that of the Holy Communion; and that too, simply because having chosen and appointed a certain instrumentality, God will not suffer us to set it aside: He can send grace through any channel, but we have no right to look for it, neither is it ordinarily given, except through such channels as He has been pleased to ordain.

And if even the righteous would suf-

fer through the want of the public assembly, what is to be said of the unrighteous, in whom there hath yet to be created the appetite for spiritual food, and who cannot therefore be expected to study the written word in search of things by which they may be saved? It would be almost like putting a final arrest on the propagation of Divine truth, to close all our churches, and silence all our ministers. The printing-press might be increasingly active; it might multiply a hundredfold the copies of the Bible; and an industrious agency might insure their circulation, so that there should not be a family, and scarcely an individual, unfurnished with the Scriptures. But it is only saying that it pleaseth God “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” to say that all this diffusion of the written word would do little towards saving the country from utter ignorance and contempt of the Creator and Redeemer. It is the preaching of the word which ordinarily produces the reading. It is commonly in consequence of something which has been heard in the sanctuary, that a man is induced to betake himself to the study of the Bible; a text has been driven home to his conscience, as uttered by the minister of Christ, and then he has opened and examined the book, a line of which could penetrate with so mysterious a force. But Bibles without preachers would, for the most part, be Bibles without readers; and even where readers were found, we have little warrant for thinking that much conversion would ensue: we still fall back on the known ordinance of God, who has made the pulpit, not the press, the great engine in the propagation of the Gospel; and we argue from it, that there is no known machinery which could supply the place of a standing ministry, ministering with full authority, and in structures set apart for the public service of God.

So that we can safely contend for the indispensableness, under the existing dispensation, of sanctuaries or churches, maintaining that cities, without these sacred edifices, would be cities that must ere long be wholly sunk in irreligion, and occupied by a population with no fear of God. There is more than theory on the side of this opinion, though the theory, as based on the word and ordi-

ance of God, ought itself to suffice for conviction. But we have unhappily made the experiment, and are therefore in the position to add experience to theory; we suffered our population vastly to outgrow the means of religious instruction, so that parishes numbered thousands, whilst parish churches held but tens. And the large masses of human beings, for whom there were thus virtually no temples at all, became morally degraded, to an extent which it was fearful to survey. They sunk, we might almost say, to the level of the Pagans, the only thing which kept them from actual equality having been that influence which the existing Christianity puts forth, even on those who are without its pale, or who know nothing more of it than the name. But to the disease thus engendered, we have applied, in a measure, the instituted remedy. We have planted churches in the midst of these overgrown masses, and it is not too much to say, that, in the majority of instances, this bringing of the neglected into contact with the ministrations of the Gospel, has done much towards overcoming profligacy, and reclaiming numbers who seemed hopelessly dissolute; so that, as though the want of a church had been like the want of the temple in Jerusalem, and with the building it religion had revived, the moral waste has given tokens of verdure, and borne rich fruits to the glory of God.

You are not therefore to think that we are guilty of any exaggeration, when we affirm that we can no better spare our churches than the Jews could their temple. I know that in a special manner was the religion of the Jews identified with their temple, so that Jerusalem without its temple, was not merely Jerusalem, it was the whole of Judea, incapacitated for the worship of Jehovah. And the prophet, as he wandered through the city, and found that the sacred edifice was not yet rebuilt, might have felt as though God must have departed from the land, seeing there was no place where the Shekinah might rest, no solemn recesses whence the voice or the glory of the Eternal might issue mysteriously forth. But practically and speedily, if not on the instant, would it also be to suspend religion amongst ourselves, were the land to become suddenly a land without churches. There

will be no temples in heaven, none, at least, we are told by St. John, but the Lord God Almighty Himself, and the Lamb, because in heaven we shall not need any medium of communication; we shall not be taught through intermediate agency; but, privileged to draw at once from the fountain, shall require not the channels which conveyed to us waters during the pilgrimage of life. But the very reason for the absence of churches from the heavenly city argues their necessity under the present dispensation: here we have no direct vision; we are placed without the veil, and cannot gaze on the uncreated; and we must therefore submit to an appointment which orders that we be instructed through certain means, and derive grace through certain channels. Take away, therefore, our churches, and you cut off our supplies. The very righteous will languish; and the unrighteous, no longer plied through the instrumentality of a standing ministry, will more and more throw off restraint, till the land becomes covered with wickedness, and has lost all that salt which now stays the progress of moral decomposition.

And in proportion as we allow any city, or any portion of our population, to be destitute of the public means of grace, we fasten on that city, or population, something of the same religious incapacity as was fastened on Jerusalem, whilst its temple lay in ruins. What moved the prophet, what excited his anger and grief, as he saw houses rising, and the temple not rebuilt? The consciousness that the inhabitants of those houses were not possessed of a mode of access to God, and that the want of a temple must debar them from serving Him acceptably, and growing acquainted with his will. Therefore did he weep: he cared not that the city wanted the gorgeous pile, which might have completed its architectural beauty; but he cared that the citizens wanted the ordained instrumentality, through which they might worship and know the God of their fathers. And thus would it be with the Christian minister, who might look on a growing town, none of whose structures were consecrated to Christ, or on a spreading valley, rich in scattered villages, but those villages all wanting a church. He would not lament, because the town

wanted its best diadem, the diadem of steeple and tower, or because the valley was without the richest of ornaments, the spire which points man to the sky, and seems to bid him to a heavenward flight; but he would lament, and bitterly lament, that the dwellers in that town, or that valley, must be destitute of the chief means of religious instruction; that practically no Sabbaths could break on them with their soothing and sanctifying influence, and that, wanting the instituted provision, through which righteousness may be upheld, and wickedness overcome, they must soon grow virtually into heathens, whatever had been the strength of their Christianity at first. And he might justly walk through that town, or make the round of that valley, upbraiding the inhabitants as men who were doing their best to weave an impenetrable moral darkness round themselves and their children. I see him stirred with a holy indignation as he looks upon mansions and shops and warehouses and farms, but searches in vain for the house of his God. He goes into no lengthened statement of the enormity of those who have thus built for the body, and forgotten the soul. Enough that he can point to one kind of structure, but see no traces of another. And he has said sufficient to cover all whom he meets with confusion, because sufficient to prove them wilfully negligent of their highest, their everlasting interests, when he has cast his expostulation into the form of our text, "Is it for you, O ye, to dwell in cieled houses, and the house of the Lord to lie utterly waste?"

Now the principle which we may be said to have thus extracted from our text, is very simple and practical. The Jews are not blamed for having built their own houses, but for not having, at the same time, built the house of God. The thing implied is, that they ought either to have begun with the temple, dwelling in tents until that had been finished, or that, at least, the temple should have risen conjointly with the other parts of the city. And the principle derivable from this is, that, where-soever there is the gathering together of human beings as a community, there ought to be in the midst of them a house devoted to God. We speak of this principle as fairly derivable, because

we have already taken pains to show you that the difference between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, is not a difference which makes the temple less important under the Gospel than it was under the law. We may make a Jerusalem of every town and every village, seeing that in every town and every village we may equally have the temple; but a town, or a village, which has not a church, is virtually what Jerusalem was, with its cieled houses, but the house of God lying waste.

So that there is contained in our text the great truth which the advocates of church extension are continually laboring to impress upon the public mind; namely, that a church ought to be planted on every spot where there is peopled neighborhood enough to furnish it with occupants; and that it is a grievous sin, a sin which must entail both present and future retribution, when a population is suffered to spread, with no commensurate spreading of the means of Christian instruction, to build themselves houses, yet to have no building for the worship of God, the hearing of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments. But whilst the text may be thus pointedly and forcibly applied to ourselves, because asserting that a certain proportion, if we may use the expression, should be maintained between church building and house building, we have not yet gone the whole length of the remonstrance; there is a further charge against the Jews, beyond that of merely making habitations for themselves, to the neglect of that of God; and we must see whether this further charge might not be made good against ourselves.

It is contained in the expression, "cieled houses," on which we have already remarked as indicating that the Jews had reared costly and luxurious dwellings, though, all the while, they were pleading that they were not in a condition to undertake the rebuilding of the temple. The thing which strikes the prophet, and on which, under the direction of God, he proceeds indignantly to comment, is, that whilst the temple lay in ruins, there were sumptuous structures to be seen in Jerusalem, structures which denoted the opulence of the inhabitants, and therefore proved that want of will alone caused the

Lord's house to be waste. If the Jews had been living in temporary buildings, hastily constructed for the present emergency, it might at least have been a plausible statement, that they were yet too poor to raise up the sanctuary; but when their houses were "cieled houses," spacious and ornamented mansions, it was impossible to doubt that they had no heart for the building the temple, but were resolved to lavish on themselves the wealth which they were bound to have consecrated to God. And thus you have an argument, so to speak, in our text, against any country, where the sumptuousness of its secular buildings forms a contrast with the meanness of its religious. The argument hitherto has been, that a country is condemned if the number of its churches bear no just proportion to the number of its houses; but now it is the character or style of the respective buildings which is appealed to in evidence; and the comparison lies between magnificent dwellings, and mean temples.

It cannot tell well for a land, if its opulence be more shown in other structures than in those which are devoted to the service of God. I know that the Almighty dwelleth not in temples made with hands, and that it is not the gorgeousness of architecture which will attract his presence, or fix his residence. I am well assured that He will come down as benignantly, and abide as graciously, when his servants have assembled in the rude village church, as when they occupy the splendid cathedral, with its storied aisles, and its fretted roof. But this has nothing to do with the question as to the propriety of our throwing splendor round our religious edifices, whensoever it is in our power to do so: the mean building may have the Shekinah within it, as well as the magnificent; but is this any reason why we should rear only the mean, if we have it in our power to rear the magnificent? I think not. God was content to have a tabernacle whilst his people were in the wilderness, or still harassed by enemies; but when He had given them abundance and peace, He required a temple, a temple of which David, when meditating the structure, could say, "The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be

exceeding magnificent." And when this house rose, it was the wonder of the earth; the gold and the silver and the precious stones, were lavished on its walls; and the temple soared into the sky, a glorious mass, refulgent as though it had descended from above, rather than been raised by mortal hands. We forget not again the change of dispensation, when we derive from the splendor of the Jewish sanctuary an argument for the duty of beautifying the house of the Lord. But we do think, that when, with every token of approval, the Almighty took possession of a structure on which architecture had exhausted all its power, and wealth poured forth its treasures, He did give evidence that churches, inasmuch as they are buildings reared to his honor, ought to exhibit the opulence of the builders, and thus to be monuments of the readiness of piety to devote to the Lord the riches derived from his bounty.

We cannot take it as any wholesome symptom which is now to be observed in this country, that, whilst other structures are advancing in magnificence, churches are of a less costly style. If we compare ourselves with our ancestors, it may be said that we build more spacious and luxurious houses: if we want new exchanges, they shall be such as quite to throw the old into the shade; new houses of Parliament, they shall wonderfully outdo what the fire has destroyed; yea, even our hospitals and infirmaries, they shall be almost as palaces compared with those of olden days; but if we want new churches, they shall be as simple and unadorned as possible, contrasting strangely with the vaulted, and arched, and richly-sculptured piles which a former age delighted to consecrate to God. Better, indeed, struggling as we are to overtake a redundant population, to have the two plain churches, than the one costly edifice: but there is wealth enough in the land, wealth displayed in the "cieled houses" of every other kind, to admit of our churches being costly as well as numerous; and the question is, whether it will not at last tell against us as a people, that, whilst we were thus enabled to go beyond our ancestors in the magnificence of all other buildings, whether public or private, we adopted a more niggardly style in regard to our

churches, as though it were unimportant, in respect either of God or ourselves, what kind of structure were set apart for the offices of religion.

It is not unimportant—not unimportant in respect of God; for if the church is his house, it ought, like the palace of a king, to bear as great proportion as we have power to effect to the majesty of the occupant. Not unimportant in respect of ourselves: who has not been conscious of the power of a cathedral—the power to excite lofty emotions and soaring thoughts—a power, as though arch and pillar were indeed haunted by Deity, so solemnizing and spirit-stirring are they, as they surround and canopy the worshippers, like the stately trunks and the clustering boughs of a forest, from whose depths come the utterances of God? It is vain to endeavor to make ourselves out independent on associations: we must be content to be material as well as spiritual, and not disdain the aids which a place of worship may give to the piety of the worshippers.

But, at the least, it cannot tell well for the religious feeling of a country, if there be parsimony in its churches, whilst there is profusion every where else. The churches—not the streets, not the squares, not the warehouses, not the docks, not the palaces—the churches ought to be the chief evidences, as well by their stateliness as their number, of the growing power and wealth of a Christian kingdom. We have nothing to say against the multiplication of spacious mansions, of lofty edifices in which commerce may hold her court, literature gather her votaries, or legislators debate. But woe must be unto a country, if, whilst all this goes forward, the house of the Lord be not enlarged, or enlarged only at the least possible expense, so that its courts shall want the splendor which every other structure exhibits. This is precisely the state of things so indignantly denounced in our text. It was this that called forth the expostulation of the prophet. And is it not to be seen amongst ourselves? Notwithstanding the vast efforts of the few last years, the amount of church accommodation, especially in the metropolitan and manufacturing districts, is very greatly in arrears of the amount of population; whilst the structures rear-

ed for public worship, reared under a necessity for rigid economy, are certainly, to say the least, no monument that the national piety is eager to consecrate unto God the national wealth.

If you would contrast us with our ancestors, whether as to the number or character of our religious edifices, only compare what is called the city with more modern parts of our overgrown metropolis. The city is literally crowded with churches; their spires are a sort of forest; and the most of these ecclesiastical structures are of rare beauty and costly material; so that in many a narrow lane or obscure court may you find a solid and richly ornamented building, contrasting strangely with those by which it is surrounded; but the contrast only showing that our forefathers felt it both a duty and a privilege to devote the best to God, and to keep the inferior for themselves. But pursue your way to the more modern parts of the metropolis, and you have line upon line of stately mansions: a magician would seem to have been there, conjuring up a multitude of palaces, that all the wealth of the world might be magnificently housed,—but where and what, for the most part, are the churches? Alas, they do not crowd upon you as in the streets where the old citizens dwell! You may wander comparatively long distances without meeting a church; and when one rises amid some gorgeous assemblage of the homes of nobles, or the halls of science, in place of excelling the city church in any thing of the proportion that the modern mansion excels the ancient, it is commonly below, in all that can mark veneration of Deity, the deserted edifice where past generations worshipped and rest. And we want, therefore, to know, whether if a prophet were now to arise in the midst of us, he might not fairly address to us the very expostulation contained in our text. I see him walking our spacious streets; he cannot take a step without fresh evidence that we have wondrously advanced in all the comforts and luxuries of life; but he looks for proof that, along with this advance, there has been a growing manifestation of the national piety, a manifestation in that the number and sumptuousness of our churches at least keep pace with the number and sumptuousness of our dwellings: he

looks in vain ; and then, with a voice of indignation, a voice which should strike terror into all who remember that unto whom much is given, from them shall much be required, he exclaims to the passers by, "Is it time for you, O ye, to live in cieled houses, and this house lie waste ?"

We have thus endeavored to show you that our text, when taken under different points of view, is equally applicable to ourselves—applicable, first, as asserting a necessity that churches must be provided if religion is to be upheld ; and, secondly, as making the display of opulence in other structures bear witness against the paucity and meanness of ecclesiastical. The Incorporated Society for promoting the enlargement, building, and repairing of Churches and Chapels, now appeals to you, under the sanction of her Majesty's letter, for assistance in rolling off the reproach which lies on us as a people, in so far, at least, as that reproach results from the insufficiency of our church accommodation. The Society has done much, though but little, alas, in comparison of the wants of a rapidly augmenting population. It has now been twenty years in operation ; and during that time it has assisted in providing additional church room for 435,000 persons, of which number the free and unappropriated sittings for the use of the poor are for 318,000. Surely this is a gratifying statement, that within twenty years 318,000 of the poor of the land should have been provided, without cost, with the means of Christian instruction,—318,000 who, apart from such provision, would have had scarcely any opportunity of hearing the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ :—this ought to be good tidings to all who love the Redeemer, and honestly desire the advancement of his kingdom.

For when every abatement is made, whether for defective attendance or defective ministration, it cannot be questioned, that, through this multiplication of churches, numbers, vast numbers, have been brought into acquaintance with truth, and into the diligent use of the ordinances of grace, who would otherwise have remained in spiritual ignorance, virtually without God and without hope in the world. Indeed, if it once be admitted that it is through the public

means of grace that God ordinarily acts in the conversion and edifying of men, no Christian can be content so long as there are men in the land who have not those means within reach ; every Christian must rejoice in all such extension of the means as shall leave fewer and fewer beyond the pale of parochial superintendence. Do I consider that the mere planting of a church in a neglected neighborhood will regenerate that neighborhood ? Do I assume as a matter of course, that, because a church has been built, the Gospel will be simply and faithfully preached ? Far enough from this : I know that the church will not be filled, unless entrusted to a minister who will assiduously devote himself to the task of reclaiming the alienated people ; and I know also how possible it is that the appointed minister may be deficient in the qualities which he ought to possess. But do I, on such accounts, regret the erection of the church, or conclude that no benefits result from the addition to the amount of church accommodation ? Far enough from this ; if the church be not immediately made as useful as it might, it is there for successive generations : one minister will pass away and another arise ; and I cannot doubt, that, in the course of years, there will be the frequent and full publication of the Gospel of Christ ; and that, too, in a place where, but for this edifice, the glad tidings of salvation would never have been announced.

Neither, moreover, can we believe in the existence of any case in which there is actually no present good. We will venture to say that the church is never built in a destitute neighborhood, which does not cause some to attend public worship who never attended it before. And it is a good—say what you will—that even a few should be brought to a better observance of the Sabbath, to the joining in the evangelical prayers of our Liturgy, to the hearing the Bible publicly read, and to the receiving the blessed sacraments of our faith. Besides, a church seldom, if ever, springs up without being speedily followed by schools ; so that the young are brought under culture, and thus seed is sown which may yield, by the blessing of God, a rich moral harvest. In the least favorable case, therefore, we can rejoice that a church has been

built, and regard it as associated with the best interests of the neighborhood; whilst, in the majority of cases, there is no alloy whatever to the pleasure with which we contemplate a new place of worship: we know it, and we can prove it, a sort of centre of civilization, whence humanizing and elevating influences go out through a mass of our fellow-men, hitherto perhaps abandoned to ignorance and all its fearful concomitants—a focus from which diverge the rays of a moral illumination, lighting up many a dark spot, and leading many a wanderer to the only refuge for the sinful and the lost.

You are now asked to contribute liberally towards this great work of multiplying churches. Applications for assistance are pouring in to the Incorporated Society, and its funds are literally exhausted. Manufacturing districts are crying for help: cities, towns, villages, all are eager to participate in the ministrations of the Established Church; though large masses of their inhabitants are now unavoidably excluded, through the want or the narrowness of churches. Support, then, the Establishment by increasing its power of doing good. Every church which is built is a new tower on its battlements. I know not whether the Establishment could have withstood recent and present assaults, had they been made some years ago, before there was any effort to increase church accommodation. But the Establishment has been so strengthened by the extension of her ministrations, that, by the blessing of God, she may defy her enemies. She has been strengthened, not by obtaining new pledges from a sovereign, or fresh patronage from nobles, but by giving thousands and tens of thousands of the poor a share in her services. She has thus rooted herself more deeply in the affections of the people: and let her only

continue to hold the same course, making her ministrations more and more commensurate with the growing demand, and thus increasingly proving herself, what no other body can even pretend to be, emphatically the poor man's church, and we can be confident that no weapon formed against her will prosper, but that her adversaries will compass their own shame and confusion.

I rejoice that, required as I am by duties in another place to leave you for the ensuing month, I should have had this opportunity of making an appeal to your Christianity and your churchmanship. I go to fulfil my engagement as select preacher before the university of Cambridge during the month of November; and I shall have to carry with me to that seat of learning, with which the well-being of the Established Church is indissolubly bound, fresh witness that those amongst whom God hath called me to labor, are firmly attached to that Church, persuaded of its worth, and bent on its support. Ye are not, ye will not be, of those who prefer their own luxury and aggrandizement to the glory of God, and the welfare of man. Ye are not, ye will not be, of those who may be taunted with living in their cieled houses, while the house of the Almighty lieth waste. Rather will ye resolve, and act on the resolution, that, so far as in you lies, the houses of God shall be multiplied in the land, till all, young and old, rich and poor, shall have ample opportunity of owning and praising Him as Creator and Redeemer—yea, of magnifying Him for his countless mercies in words such as these which I now ask you to sing:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

S E R M O N I X .

THE FINAL TEST.

* Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."—MATT. XXV. 34—36.

During the last week, the Church has called upon us to commemorate that great event, the Ascension of Christ; and her second lesson for this morning's service, though the coincidence is accidental, follows with singular appropriateness after such a commemoration. Having seen our Lord go up into heaven, having listened to angels declaring that He shall so come again in like manner, what portion of Scripture could be more suited to our next assembling than one which delineates under bold figures how the Son of man shall descend in his glory, and represents all nations as gathered before Him, that every man may be judged according to his works? And if the lesson might thus seem to have been chosen on purpose for the Sunday, you will allow that it is also peculiarly adapted to the occasion of my addressing you. Having to plead the cause of the sick and the destitute, whither can I better turn for motives to benevolence than to that grand sketch of the last assize, whence we learn that the test to which we shall be brought, when on trial for eternity, is that of our having shown love to others out of love to Christ? On every account, therefore, we could not long hesitate as to the subject of our present discourse. The text seemed chosen for us; and we have only to endeavor to follow out those trains of thought which it seems naturally to open.

We wish, however, in order to guard against any misapprehension of our

succeeding statements, to premise a few remarks on the general doctrine which our Lord's words present, and which appears to be that of our portion hereafter being to be determined by our works here. We observe at once that it cannot be improper to speak of reward from God to man, seeing that it is expressly declared in Scripture of certain actions that they shall obtain, or shall not lose, their reward. The question, therefore, is, as to the sense in which reward can follow human actions, and yet all the happiness men gain be, as the Scriptures represent it, the free gift of God. We throw away altogether the idea, that there can be any thing in the best works to make God man's debtor, or that man, whatever his doings, can have claim on the Divine justice as meriting good. It is confessedly impossible, from the very nature of the relation between the creature and the Creator, that God can be so advantaged by the actions of those He has made as to owe them any favor in return: and, therefore, the works of those most eminent for righteousness, can possess no merit, according to the general acceptation of the term; if they obtain reward at all, it cannot be reward to which their own worth entitles them. If this be borne in mind, there will be no difficulty in explaining how works may be rewarded, and yet all that men receive be purely gratuitous.

The only works which God approves, or which are good works in the Scriptural sense, are those which result from God Himself working in us by the energies of his Spirit. But if God, of

* Preached at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, on behalf of the Charing Cross Hospital.

his great mercy, be pleased to reward these works, assuredly, forasmuch as He is Himself the Author of these works, the reward is altogether of grace. What God rewards is his own work in us, and certainly, then, in rewarding, He bestows a free gift. There would be no obligation upon God to recompense human actions, not even those which exhibit most zeal for his glory, and most love to his name. But He is pleased to offer certain blessings, on condition of our performing certain actions: and these blessings, thus offered, are precisely what rewards would be, if merit were not wholly out of reach. If therefore the actions be performed, then, though they have not deserved in the strict sense of the word, and though they have not been wrought by our own power, still, since God has been pleased to affix certain blessings to the performance, we may both say that these actions are rewarded, and that what they obtain is purely of grace. It is of grace, so long as what is obtained could not be claimed as a thing of right: and nevertheless it may be fairly called reward, so long as it follows as a consequence on the doing certain actions.

It will suffice to have made these few observations on the general doctrine which may be derived from our text,—a doctrine which is not incompatible with the fundamental tenet of justification by faith, seeing that good works spring naturally from faith, and are alike its fruit and its evidence; and which leaves man still indebted for every thing to God, seeing that from God comes the grace through which alone can be wrought any acceptable action.

But leaving these and the like references to the general doctrine involved in our text, we would now address you, in the first place, on the person by whom the last trial is to be conducted; and in the second place, on the test, or criterion, by which its sentences are to be settled;—the person, the one Mediator between God and man; the test, the having fed the hungry, and visited the sick.

Now in our text it is “the King,” one invested with regal sway, who is represented as carrying on the great business of the assize on human kind.

But in a preceding verse, this King is spoken of as the “Son of man;” so that in the august form, before whom myriads upon myriads are assembled, we recognize that “man of sorrows,” who “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” And we wish you here to consider the combined justice and mercy of the appointment, that He who is to decide our portion for eternity, is the very being who died as our surety. We suppose the end of all things to be come, the dead to have heard the voice of the archangel, so that small and great are hastening to judgment. We suppose that sublime and fearful vision, which was granted to the evangelist, now receiving its accomplishment. “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.” And who is it that sits upon this throne? Who is it by whose verdict the condition of untold myriads is to be eternally fixed, and whose single sentence is to determine whether everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery, shall be awarded to the several members of the vast human family?

It is a question of the first moment; for the thorough equity of the trial depends mainly on the character and capacity of the being who presides. If you tell me that an angel, the highest and the holiest occupies the judgment-seat, you do not satisfy me that every verdict will be rigidly just. I cannot believe of any finite being, that he knows so accurately every circumstance in the conduct of every individual of our race, that he can make no mistake in settling the portions of the millions upon millions, who throng to him for sentence. The wicked man may have hopes of eluding his penetration, and the righteous may have fears as to the extent of his powers of discrimination; and therefore, you may array this angel-judge with majestic attributes and assign him every noble property in the highest perfection consistent with creature-ship; but there can be no certainty, throughout that mighty assemblage which the graves have given up that no crime shall escape detection, and nothing done for God be overlooked.

What then? shall the throne be occupied by Deity Himself? shall men

appear before their Maker, and receive their doom from the Omniscient? Beyond all question, such an arrangement is not liable to those objections which seem to lie against the appointment of an angel as our judge. Nothing can escape the Omniscient; and therefore it is impossible that his decisions should be other than most rigidly impartial. The beings who are crowding up from the sepulchres, if told that He who created them, whose all-seeing eye has watched their every action, so that, in the deepest solitude, they have been under his inspection, the very thoughts of the heart having been observed and registered—if told, we say, that this Omnipresent one, from whom nothing can be hidden, and by whom nothing can be forgotten, is about to sit in scrutiny on their conduct, and determine, accordingly, their everlasting state, will they not be fraught with a persuasion that every thing will be done by the strictest rules of equity, and that there will not be a solitary particular in the enormous sum of human doings, which shall be passed by without note, and without recompense? Yes, they must necessarily be persuaded of all this; and yet there would be a kind of shrinking from the tribunal, as though it were not that to which creatures like ourselves should be summoned. We confess the amazing dignity of the Judge. We own it impossible that any one should fail to receive at his hands the most exact retribution, that a single threatening, or a single promise, should not be made good, that hypocrisy should be undetected, or humility unobserved. But then, it is the very dignity of the Judge which confounds us. There is so unmeasured a separation between ourselves and the being by whom we shall be tried, that we cannot go with any confidence to his tribunal. He can have no sympathy with us. Of a different nature, a nature, too, which has nothing in common with the feebleness of our own, how is it possible that He should at all enter into our case, make allowances for our circumstances, and decide with a nice reference to our capabilities and trials? O then for a Judge who can have something of a fellow-feeling with the parties to be judged. We shrink away from absolute Deity. We know not how the

weak and the offending are to find access to one who has nothing in common with them, who has never experienced any of their cares, who has had none of their battles to fight, none of their sorrows to endure, none of their temptations to wrestle with. And how can such a Judge, with all his wisdom and all his justice, be a fit judge of fallen men?

But do we then ask that our judge should be man? Indeed, who but man can fully sympathize with man? And yet, if an angel be not qualified to sit in judgment on this world, how can a man be? A man may have the power of sympathy which an angel has not; but he is far inferior to the angel in those other properties which go to the constitution of a judge; and in those properties we were forced to pronounce even angels, the loftiest and most richly endowed, altogether deficient. So that, if we would determine who alone seems fitted to bear the office of Judge of this creation, we appear to require the insupposable combination, insupposable, we mean, so long as you shut us out from the Gospel, of the omniscience of Deity, and the feelings of humanity. We cannot dispense with the omniscience of Deity. We see clearly enough, that no finite intelligence can be adequate to that acquaintance with every iota of human conduct, which is essential to our being certain of the thorough justice of future retribution. But then neither can we dispense with the feelings of humanity. At least, we can have no confidence in approaching his tribunal, if we are sure that a difference in nature incapacitates him for sympathy with those whose sentence he is about to pronounce, and precludes the possibility of his so making our case his own, as to allow of his deciding with due allowance for our feebleness and temptations.

Here, then, revelation comes in, and sets before us a Judge in whose person is that amazing combination which we have just pronounced as insupposable as indispensable. That man, by whom God hath ordained that He will judge the world in righteousness, is Himself Divine, the "Word that was in the beginning with God, and which was God." He shall come in human form, and every eye shall see him, "bone

of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ;” and they that pierced Him shall look upon Him, and recognize, through all his majesty, “the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Yet He who descends is equally the ever-living Creator; the angel and the archangel, by whom He is surrounded, adore Him as “from everlasting and to everlasting,” “the beginning and the end,” the infinite, the self-existent. In his person, then, is that marvellous union which we seek in the Judge of the whole human race. He is God, and therefore must He know every particular of character, every action, every motive, every thought, every word; so that there cannot rest suspicion on any of his verdicts: He cannot be imposed on by the show of piety, and He cannot overlook it where real. But then He is also man; He has Himself been a sojourner upon earth: He has borne my griefs, and wept my tears, and experienced my trials; and therefore will He put Himself into the situation of those who are brought to his bar; He will know exactly what they have had to contend with, and be able to adjust each sentence to the opportunities and capabilities of the party on whom it is passed. Are we not therefore assured that mercy and justice will alike have full scope in the transactions of the Judge, and that, in appointing that the Mediator who died as our substitute, should preside at our trial for eternity, God hath equally provided that every decision should be impartial, and yet every man be dealt with as brother to Him who must determine his fate?

It is, we think, one of the most beautiful of the arrangements which characterize the Gospel, that the offices of Redeemer and Judge meet in the same person, and that person Divine. We call it a beautiful arrangement, as securing towards us tenderness as well as equity, the sympathies of a friend as well as the disinterestedness of a most righteous arbiter. Had the Judge been only man, the imperfection of his nature would have made us expect much of error in his verdicts. Had He been only God, the distance between Him and ourselves would have made us fear it impossible, that, in determining our lot, He would take into the account our feebleness and trials. The hypocrite might have hoped

to baffle the penetration of the man; the lowly and afflicted, conscious of frequent transgressions, of broken vows, of inconsistencies and backslidings, might have been appalled by the perfections of the Godhead. It would have been an encouragement to wickedness, had the Judge been mere man, and therefore liable to be deceived; it would have filled humble piety with dread, had the Judge been only God, and therefore not to be “touched with a feeling of our infirmities.”

But now the grave shall yield up its countless population, and no one, throughout the vast assemblage of creatures awaiting their trial, shall have a word to object against the fitness of the being who occupies the judgment-seat. The bold transgressor, who lived on in rebellion, despite every remonstrance, and who died the impenitent, he shall know that awful form on the throne of fire and cloud, and long to screen himself beneath the mountain and the rock that he might escape the trial and the sentence—but not because he can impeach the judicial qualities of the arbiter before whom he must appear; oh, only because the book of his own conscience has been opened, and from its pages is poured forth a torrent of accusation, and he knows that the being about to judge him, is the very being who endured agony for him, and shed blood for him; and because, therefore, he also knows that there is no plea which can be urged against his utter condemnation, no subterfuge by which he may escape: mercy exhausted itself, and was despised; what then shall arrest justice, or procure acquittal for the guilty? The believer in Christ who hearkened to the suggestions of God’s Spirit, and brake away from the trammels of sin, he too shall know the Son of man, as He comes down in the magnificent sternness of celestial authority. And whatever his emotions, as the inconceivably tremendous scene is spread before him and around him, he will be assured and comforted as he gazes on the Judge, and beholds in Him the Mediator who counted nothing too precious to be given for his ransom. He will remember that he has entered into covenant with that majestic personage, before whom the human race is being marshalled. And, therefore, as

the wicked shall seek to hide themselves from the Judge, as knowing Him so fitted for the office that they cannot escape, so the righteous shall go in hope and confidence to his tribunal, regarding Him as their surety, and certified of his sympathy. Thus each class, the one by the passionate cry to the rock and the mountain, the other by that holy assurance which proves that it takes to itself the words of the prophet, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us;" each class, we say, furnishes evidence how just and yet how merciful, is the appointment of the Redeemer of all; and tells out, in accents which shall be understood and felt by those eager spectators who flock from every quarter of creation to behold and approve the dealings of their God, that it must indeed be in righteousness that the world shall be judged, seeing that it is none other than the Mediator, who, as King upon the throne, shall pronounce the words, "Come, ye blessed," and "Depart, ye cursed."

But we would now turn your attention on the test or criterion furnished by our text. You see that the alone reason given why one set of men should enter the kingdom and another be excluded is, that the former have, and the latter have not, relieved the distressed. The character of the final portion is made dependent on nothing but the having fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and visited the sick: those who have thus ministered to Christ in his members going away into life eternal, and those who have not thus ministered being, on that account, given over to everlasting punishment. And it becomes a great question, how the poor, who have nothing to bestow, can pass a trial whose criterion thus seems to presuppose an ability to bestow; and how that large bulk of a community, who appear necessitated to continue in the class of receivers, can, by any the most unremitting strivings, bring themselves within the condition laid down for the obtaining the blessedness of immortality. The having relieved the necessitous seems made indispensable to the escaping the fire and reaching to glory: whereas, to all appearance, nine out of ten are disqualified, and that, too, through no fault of their own, for lighten-

ing the pressure of other men's trials, and thus, if the sentences be according to the criterion, for securing to themselves the "Come ye blessed" at the judgment. If the man who labors with his hands can succeed in making such an overplus by his labors, that he has something to give to the destitute, it is clearly possible for him to satisfy that test which is furnished by Christ's sketch of his assize on the nations. But if—and this case is of constant occurrence—though he toil with unwearied industry, he can never gain a fraction more than bare sufficiency, and thus never have the power of assisting poorer brethren, it may be hard for him to see how he can stand in a position of acceptance, when the Judge makes inquisition as to the food and the clothing which have been dealt out to the needy. We desire, if possible, to elucidate this point. We are wholly against the opinion, that the power of being charitable is limited to the richer classes, and that none but those who have at least something more than a sufficiency can administer to the wants of the sick and the necessitous. We contend that the making such a limitation would be tantamount to ascribing an undue privilege to the possession of wealth, seeing that it would represent the rich man as enabled, by his riches, to prepare himself for the inquires of the last judgment, at an absolute and scarce measurable advantage over the poor man, whose labor only just secures him a livelihood. And can it be that the possessor of money is thus on a vantage ground as compared with its non-possessor, when both are regarded as candidates for immortality? If it be true, as we learn from the Bible, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," are we to conclude that by the disposition of external advantages, God has shut out the great body of Christians from all ability of reaching the superior blessedness of the giver, and fastened them indissolubly to the inferior of the receiver? On the contrary, we shall not hesitate to say, that the poor man may be the giver just as well as the rich, though his every farthing be required for the keeping off starvation from his household, so that the produce of his labor is never such as to allow of his giving a suffering neighbor one jot of assistance.

We take the case of the peasant or mechanic, who rises early and late takes rest, and who by most strenuous exertions, and by submitting to constant privation, just contrives to support his young family without applying to the parish, or appealing to private bounty. It is quite possible that hundreds, who have no greater difficulties to struggle with, will not be content to wear themselves down by the same toil, and undergo the same hardships, and will therefore degrade themselves into paupers, and go to the parish-board, or solicit aid from the wealthy. But the high-minded man to whom we have referred, determines, and acts out the determination, that unless sickness incapacitate him for labor, or the means of procuring a virtuous sufficiency be put absolutely beyond reach, he will neither burden the poor-rate nor take help from the charitable. Now what we ask of you is, does this man give away nothing in charity? Is he shut out from the being liberal and benevolent by the circumstance that the sum total of the proceeds of his labor is but just equal to the sum total of the demands of his household? We can never admit this. The peasant, indeed, must say, "Silver and gold have I none;" and therefore of silver and gold can he give none. But if he give not gold and silver, he gives bone and sinew. He pays to the poor-rate exactly that amount which, had he been a little less industrious and noble spirited, he might have drawn from the poor-rate. He throws into the funds of private benevolence precisely that sum which, had he chosen to accept the bounty of the wealthy, he might have extracted for himself, and obtained for his own family. The rich merchant contributes to the support of our destitute population by paying so much out of his superfluities to a poor-rate. But the hard laborer, who struggles unweariedly that he may not be a burden on that rate, is also a contributor to the support of the destitute, and that too by paying the tax with the sweat of his brow and the stretch of his muscle. The opulent noble lightens much of the affliction of his neighborhood by carrying or sending relief to the sick and the starving. But he is rivalled in this benevolent work by the pale and almost worn down

artizan, who never applies to him for help, and who therefore leaves him at liberty to transmit to other objects of charity that amount of assistance which his own tale of hardship would have won for himself.

We think it to be as clear as though established with all the rigor of a mathematical demonstration, that the man who will not receive what his distresses and hardships might have entitled him to receive from the funds, whether of public or private benevolence, is a giver to those funds of precisely the sum of which, had he chosen, he might have been the receiver. Neither are we casting any slur upon those of the poor whose necessities compel them to subsist, either in whole or in part, upon charity. We do not necessarily exclude even these from the class of givers. One man may use extra labor, in order that he may avoid asking any help; and then he is a giver to the amount of that assistance which he must have solicited had his industry been less intense. Another, who in spite of every exertion cannot earn enough, may take pains to do with the least possible help; and then he is a giver to the amount of that assistance which, with a less unflinching economy, his wants would have demanded. He who by the toil of limb keeps himself altogether from the list of paupers, contributes just so much to the relief of the poor as, without that toil of limb, must have been bestowed upon himself. And in like manner, he for whose wants the toil of limb cannot bring sufficiency, but who, by the toil of carefulness, makes shift to do with the smallest quantity of help, he contributes just so much to the relief of the poor as, without this toil of carefulness, must have been abstracted on his own account from the revenues of charity. What then? can ye think that when at the judgment there shall go forward an investigation of the deeds of benevolence by which Christians have proved the sincerity of their faith, none but the better classes of society, whose means have outrun their own wants, will be able to submit themselves to the appointed criterion? or that, whilst nobles may appeal to hospitals founded or sustained by their ancestral revenues, and merchants show how their purses, heavy with the gains of commerce, were

always open at the cry of the needy, the virtuous peasant who has wrestled like a giant with poverty, and scorned, whilst there was sight in his eye and strength in his limb, to touch a stiver of the funds which belonged to the destitute, must shrink back as one unable to reply otherwise than in the negative to the question, "Hast thou given bread to the hungry, and covering to the naked?" He has given: he has been a giver in not having been a receiver.

So that we show you that the lower ranks of society are no more excluded than the higher from the alleged blessedness of givers; and that those who seem to you to have nothing to bestow, may as well abide, at the last, a scrutiny into ministrations to the necessitous, as others who have large incomes at their disposal, and can take the lead in all the bustle of philanthropy. Ay, and we reckon it a beautiful truth, that, from the fields and workshops of a country may be sent to the platform of judgment the most active and self-denying of the benevolent; and that, however, in this world the praise of liberality is awarded only to those who can draw out their purses and scatter their gold, our laborers and artizans may be counted hereafter amongst the largest contributors to the relief of the afflicted. The donations which they have wrung from overtaxed limbs, or which they may be said to have coined out of their own flesh and blood, may weigh down in the balances of the judgment the more showy gifts which the wealthy dispense from their superfluities, without trenching, it may be, on their luxuries—yea, and thus is there nothing to prove to us that there may not be poured forth from the very hovels of our land, numbers who shall as well abide the searching inquiries of the Judge, as the most munificent of those who have dwelt in its palaces, and be as justly included within the summons, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," though none are to be thus addressed but such as have fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and succoured the sick.

Now there is much in the fact which we thus set before you, the fact that God has not granted to the wealthy the monopoly of benevolence, which should move you to great liberality towards

the indigent, lest you find yourselves at last outdone in charity by the very poor whom you succor. You see that the man who endows an alms-house out of a well-stocked purse, has a formidable rival in alms-giving in the mechanic who struggles night and day to keep out of that alms-house. It is quite possible that he who reared the asylum, and put over it his coat of arms, may be far lower down at the last in the list of the charitable than he who, rather than claim the succor of that asylum, wore away old age in toil and privation.

There is much also in the considerations which have been advanced, to urge you specially to support institutions which afford succor to the industrious in a season of trouble. We feel that in striving to raise the character of a population, and to restore that healthy tone which exists wherever charitable aid, in place of being coveted and sought, is but resorted to in some singular emergencies, we make an effort which, if successful, would lift this population into a higher moral, as well as a higher physical, position. If I can prevail on a man, by working an additional hour, though he already work many, or by undertaking an additional task, though he have already much upon his hands, just to prevent the necessity of his seeking aid from the wealthy, why, I do that man a vast spiritual benefit: I detain him within the class of givers, when he may be actually on the point of passing over to that of receivers; and thus arrest him in his intention of throwing away that power of ministering to the necessities of others which he possesses as actually, if not as abundantly, as though he ranked amongst the nobles of the land.

And we estimate therefore the worth of charitable institutions by their tendency to check pauperism, and give encouragement to industry. Hence we always plead with great confidence for an Hospital, an Infirmary, or a Dispensary, because we know that such establishments cannot multiply the objects which they propose to relieve. An asylum for want may produce want; but the like cannot be said of an asylum for sickness. And whilst there is no tendency in an Hospital to the encouragement of pauperism, there is a tendency the very strongest to the encour-

agement of industry. The Hospital affords a shelter to the mechanic or peasant at those seasons when no exertions of his own can suffice for his wants; and then sends him back to his labor in renovated health, and with his resolve to toil cheerfully, strengthened by the consciousness, that if sickness overtake him, he has a home to which to turn. Thus, in place of there being any likelihood that the assistance of an Hospital will transfer a man from the class of givers to that of receivers, there is every probability that they will strengthen the independent laborer in his resolve to provide for himself whilst in health, because they remove the pressure of that anxiety which he might naturally feel in the prospect of sickness.

We are sure, then, that the claims of an Hospital must always strongly commend themselves to an enlightened philanthropy. We are sure also that amongst the numerous institutions of this kind which do honor to our Metropolis, none is more worthy your support than the Charing Cross Hospital, for which I now plead. It is indeed of but recent erection: but, on this very account, it more needs your help; for it has not yet had time to accumulate a single farthing of capital, so that it is still altogether dependent on voluntary contributions. And that an Hospital was not instituted in this neighborhood before it was needed, is proved by the simple fact, that, during the last year, nearly 6000 sick were admitted on its books, of which 1200 have been actually received within its walls. But until the Hospital shall be able to fund property, its operations will be necessarily limited and precarious; and we do not know a nobler thing which any of our great capitalists could do, than the providing so admirable an institution with a fitting endowment. I never before had to plead for an Hospital so circumstanced. The other Hospitals whose cause I have advocated, had their estates or their consols to fall back upon, if subscriptions diminished; and I could not feel that there would be necessarily an immediate rejection of applicants for admission, if my appeal were not liberally answered. But the case is now different. I am now actually asking

for the means of receiving that father of a family whom accident has disabled, or that mother, who, with wasted cheek, entreats succor for herself or her child. It is literally with you to determine whether the doors of the Hospital shall be closed on that emaciated thing; and you have only to be scant in your donations, and there shall soon be a widow, to whom a little more liberality might have preserved the husband of her youth, and an orphan who, had you shown yourselves more benevolent, might still have enjoyed the protection of a parent. The case therefore is peculiar. I could almost wish that I had not undertaken the advocacy: I have the sick and the dying actually in charge; and if I do not thoroughly adduce the motives to relieving them—for I know that you need nothing else to the being stirred to give largely—I shall literally have to accuse myself of depriving numbers of medical succor, and consigning them to unassuaged pain, and perhaps even to an untimely grave.

No marvel, then, if I dare not conclude without another allusion to the dread things of judgment. The sick and the dying will not acquit me of unfaithfulness, but will rather haunt me reproachfully, if, with such a subject of discourse, I do not again bring you before the great white throne, and implore of you now to act as you will wish to have acted, when the trumpet shall have sounded, and the sea and the desert shall give up their dead. Not that you are to purchase Heaven by deeds of benevolence—perish the thought—there may be founders of Hospitals, and builders of Churches, in that outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But though no man can be saved by his works, every man shall be judged according to his works. If he have believed upon Christ—and this is the single ordained mode of salvation—the sincerity of his faith will be proved by his works; and therefore, in being appointed to everlasting life, he will be judged according to his works. If he have not relied on the merits of the Saviour, the want of faith will be evidenced by the deficiency in works; and therefore will he also, in being consigned to everlasting misery, be

judged according to his works. It is then quite possible that a man may be liberal to the necessitous, and not from the Scriptural motive, but from ostentation, or at best natural kindliness; and assuredly his liberality shall not open for him that gate which is closed against all but true followers of Christ. But if a man be not liberal, according to his ability, to the necessitous, it is quite certain that he wants what alone will gain him entrance into Heaven; and we may pronounce him excluded because he closed his ear against the cry of the poor.

Thus, with no compromise of sound Protestant doctrine, but leaving in its integrity the great truth of justification by faith, we can go with you to the tribunal of God, and declare your portion determined by the mode in which you responded to such appeals as the present. This our assembling will not terminate when, a few minutes hence, this congregation shall disperse. Sabbaths die not; sermons die not. They pass away, but only to be entered in the great register of God, and to revive on the strange day of the Easter of this creation. The voice of the destitute

and suffering, which is now heard only as the plaintive moan, and the faint cry of pain, supplicating succor, shall be heard once more amid all the magnificent confusion of falling stars and dislocated systems—heard as a wild call for vengeance on the penurious, who were not to be moved to the showing kindness to the afflicted. Yes, it shall be thus heard, and the vengeance which it invokes must descend upon many—but not, we think, upon you. The sick may be comforted: they are not to be deserted; they are not appealing to the churlish and hardhearted. We have pleaded their cause feebly; we have omitted many motives, and not given to others all their strength; but ye have hearkened to words borne to you from the far depths of the future, words syllabing the rule by which the last trial shall proceed—and what were these words? Great Judge of quick and dead, we have heard Thee calling to those who have fed the hungry and visited the sick, and saying to them, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

S E R M O N X .

THE LOST SHEEP.

“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”—LUKE xv. 3–5.

You may remember that another parable is added to that which we have just read, and of precisely the same import. A woman, possessed of ten pieces

* Preached at St. Olave's, Southwark, on the 18th of June, on behalf of the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum

of silver, is represented as losing one piece, and as searching with great diligence till she find it. She then calls together her friends and her neighbors, that they may rejoice with her at the success of her inquiries. The truth which Christ infers from each parable

or rather the truth which He illustrates by each, is the same—namely, that there is greater joy in Heaven over one repentant sinner, than over a company of the righteous who need no repentance. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the parable on which we purpose to discourse is somewhat differently put, the express assertion is, that if the man find the lost sheep, he rejoiceth more of it than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. We shall take the statements of the two Evangelists promiscuously, according as they may best suit our purpose. We may safely assume that these parables are to be regarded as illustrative of God's dealings with our race; descriptive in some respects of that plan of Redemption which Christ came to execute. It is sufficiently evident that Christ designed to point out Himself as seeking the sheep that had gone astray, or the piece of money which was lost. And therefore we cannot doubt that He also designed to fix attention on the whole scheme of human rescue, as arranged for the gathering back a solitary tribe into companionship with the unfallen ranks in creation. We ask your serious attention to a simple review of the parable of which we have read you a part, and of the truth which it inculcates, on the supposition that the design of its delivery was what we have just stated.

Now we are always to remember, that out of condescension to the weakness of our faculties, and not because of the accuracy of the delineation, God is often represented to us in Scripture as acting on human principles, and moved by human affections. Thus in the parable before us He is exhibited as actuated by a feeling, which, however natural amongst ourselves, can scarcely have place in such a being as the Divine. We undoubtedly attach great value to any thing which we lose, and think little in comparison of what we still retain. The loss appears to stamp a greater worth than the possession, and if we regain what had slipped from our grasp, we are disposed to regard it as a hundredfold more precious than before. We cannot think that precisely the same feeling has place in the Divine nature. If any thing which He loves be withdrawn from God, there cannot be that uncertainty as to its recovery, that ig-

norance where it may be found, and that consequent diligence of search, which combine to the producing great delight in ourselves, when we recover a good which we had lost.

But when we have cautioned you against the supposing in Deity emotions which, by their nature, can belong only to humanity, we may proceed to regard the figurative representation as the nearest to the truth which the case will admit. It may not be denied, that whatever be God's feelings on gathering home those who have wandered from obedience, they cannot be identical with those of the man who finds amongst the mountains the one sheep which had strayed. But nevertheless there may be no case in the workings of human sympathy which furnishes so apt an illustration; and though God cannot be said to lose and recover, in the sense which such expressions bear amongst men, we can readily believe that we come nearest to what is felt by the Creator, when erring creatures are reclaimed, by ascribing to Him the sensations produced in ourselves on regaining what has wandered away. These considerations being premised, in order that you may be guarded against misapprehensions, we proceed to consider our Maker as proprietor of the hundred sheep, and man as the solitary one who has departed from the fold.

You are none of you, it may be, ignorant how the seeming insignificance of this planet, and of ourselves its inhabitants, has been turned into an argument against the truth of our Redemption; so that, setting in contrast the littleness of the human race, and the vastness of the machinery said to have been used for its rescue, men have asked whether it be credible that the Son of God humbled Himself and died for so inconsiderable a section of his unlimited empire? We are not about to expose, by any labored reasoning, the fallacy of this argument. But we wish you to observe how it sets itself against a principle which God has undoubtedly implanted in the very highest of his creatures, and of which therefore we may reasonably believe, that it has a counterpart in his own nature. And this is the principle of a possession appearing more precious just at the instant of its loss; of its engaging every so-

licitude for its recovery, and of its causing, when regained, a yet deeper gladness than is produced by those which have never been endangered. It may be true, that the Almighty had formed many worlds, and peopled each with intelligent beings, and that this earth was the solitary wanderer from an orbit of obedience. It may be true, that within the fold of the heavenly Shepherd were gathered rank upon rank of happy and righteous creatures, and that there was but one alien, one sheep which had forsaken the ever fresh pastures, and gone away to the desert or the mountain. But the fact that there was only one wanderer, only one apostate, is no evidence to us that God might be expected to abandon that one to wretchedness and ruin. That the ninety and nine sheep were yet safe in the fold, carries no conviction to our minds, that the Shepherd would care nothing for the single one which had strayed. We have the principle of our text to set against such theory. We know that this would not be the case with ourselves. We are assured that this would not be the case with the highest angels. And we feel that there is every reason to conclude, that a principle, which is to be found at the very summit of creatureship, must have a principle which corresponds to it in the Divine nature itself.

We can therefore quite believe—at least, who shall show us any thing incredible in the supposition?—that when the lonely planet had wandered into a region of storm and eclipse; the Creator was not satisfied with beholding the worlds upon worlds which still walked their pathways of light, and with listening to that melodious hymn, which flowed from the unbroken harmony of their movements. We can quite believe that it was not enough for a being of unbounded beneficence, that there was but one instance, in all the expanse of his dominions, of a race which had won misery for its heritage; and that every where, save in one inconsiderable spot, happiness had its home amongst the works of his hands. We can believe that the heart of the father went out after the prodigal child; and that the thoughts of the shepherd were with that one member of the flock which was far away in darkness and danger; and that the affections of the Creator follow-

ed that race which had left his guardianship, and dared his displeasure. And though it were indeed an overbold statement, that unless informed by Revelation, we could have supposed such amazing arrangements as have actually been made for the recovery of the sheep that was lost, we may yet declare that we see no cause for surprise in the fact, that we were not left to perish; that we see only the workings of a principle which must exist in Deity, and which, wheresoever it exists, will produce great endeavors. We will not say that we could at all have computed on the Good Shepherd giving his life for the sheep; on the employment of means so costly and stupendous as those of the Incarnation and Atonement, for the restoring a lost world to its original position. But when the scheme is made known; and when especially, with all its vastness, we cannot prove it more than commensurate with the exigencies of our condition—oh, we can find no cause for doubt or disbelief, in the alleged insignificance of man. We are not to be persuaded that this globe was too inconsiderable a spot, in comparison with the vast spreadings of immensity which were yet occupied by the holy and happy, to have engaged, in its alienation, the solitudes of its Maker. We know that what is still in possession though it be the large and magnificent, appears as nothing when compared with what is lost, though in itself the poor and unimportant. Therefore can we feel confident of the truth of a record, which declares that our race has been the object of a mighty interference; ay, and we can quite think, that, when the Shepherd had gone among the mountains, and had succeeded, though after much toil and agony, in reclaiming the wanderer, then not only were the heavenly hosts moved to greater rapture than when surveying the flock which had never left the fold, but the great Proprietor Himself, experiencing a new delight in the return of the prodigal, might be likened to a man, who, having recovered the one sheep he had lost, "rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray."

But now it may be said, if there be a principle in Deity leading Him to rejoice more of the one sheep He has

recovered than of the ninety and nine which never wandered, it is unaccountable that He brought not back the fallen angels to his fold. It is always to be remembered that men were not the leaders in rebellion: they were not the first sheep that went astray from their shepherd. And if indeed there be a new preciousness attached by danger or loss to any thing which is beloved, so that the owner is more gladdened by its recovery than by all his undisturbed possessions, how shall we explain the absence of endeavor on the part of the universal Parent to gather back those children who first left their home? Had both angels and men been left beneath the curse which disobedience had provoked, or had both been objects of Divine interposition, there would have been such uniformity in the proceedings of the Creator as, on either supposition, would have seemed in accordance with the fixed principles of his nature. But that one should have been taken and the other left,—we cannot deny that this is apparently inconsistent with the truth, that God regards all his creatures with unbounded affection, that if any one of his creatures have placed itself in peril, it gains thereby a new worth in his sight, and a new hold on his sympathy.

This is one of those difficulties upon which, since Revelation is silent, it becomes us not to advance explanatory suppositions. But, nevertheless, it does not militate against the existence of such a principle in Deity as would cause greater joy over the recovered sheep than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. There is, perhaps, after all, in place of diversity, a striking analogy between God's dealings with angels and his dealings with men. It was only a part of the angelic race which fell; it was the whole of the human. Hence the first rebellion abstracted not from the heavenly fold one order of beings, whereas the second rebellion did. And as the Almighty left some angels to perish, whilst He confirmed others in their dignity and happiness, will He not leave some men to perish, whilst He advances others to glory and blessedness? He has taken means for bringing home the wandering race: but this prevents not that many individuals of that race die in the wil-

derness, and never re-enter the fold. And thus also with the angelic race—He took means, we may not doubt, for retaining this race within the circles of his favor; but this prevented not that many of its individuals turned aside from obedience and incurred his displeasure. In each case the owner has to rejoice over a portion of the race, but in neither over the whole. And though it may seem to us marvellous that mercy should not have rejoiced against judgment when angels transgressed, and that no Shepherd should have gone forth to seek and to save what was lost, let us at least bear in mind that men may remain exiles, even though redeemed; so that God's dealings with ourselves are not such as insure necessarily our restoration to the fold. Indeed, no Mediator hath interposed on behalf of mighty spirits which kept not their first estate. They are left on the fiery mountains of wrath and tribulation; and those mountains have not been traversed by the Shepherd seeking the wanderers. But nevertheless there is a great analogy between the conditions of the whole angelic and of the whole human race, seeing that in neither case does God suffer that an order of creatures should be withdrawn from his dominion, and yet in each case allows that individuals of that order may remain in alienation.

We are not, therefore, to be moved by what is told us of the abandonment of Satan and his associates, to doubt the special outgoings of the Creator's affection towards the prodigal and the wayward. We find nothing in the instance to warrant a denial that to Deity, as well as to the beings whom He hath formed, a possession, when endangered or lost, appears more precious than when in safe keeping. And thus, though angels were cast out from heaven, and no arrangements made for their being restored, we still believe, that when God had provided for the gathering back our wandering race to Himself, and there was certainty as to the glorious results of new heavens and a new earth succeeding to those which sin had profaned, and of myriads of the apostate race becoming kings and priests unto Him against whom they had rebelled, then were there such emotions excited in our Maker as are best, though

at best but imperfectly, described by declaring, that, looking upon men, and on the countless ranks which had kept their allegiance, He was like the man who, finding the sheep he had lost, "rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray."

But it might be inferred from the parable under review, when thus taken as delineating the workings of Divine sympathy, that repentance is preferable to virtue, and that God is better pleased with those who first wander and then return, than with others who have never left their Father's house. We are sure that this is not a correct inference, however naturally it may seem to be deduced. We cannot doubt that, whatever the pleasure with which God welcomes back the prodigal, He does not regard him with greater favor than the obedient son who never went astray. We suppose this truth to be taught in that somewhat obscure portion of the parable of the prodigal son which relates the conduct of the elder son on finding how the wanderer had been welcomed. The elder son complains that there should be such demonstrations of joy on the return of a prodigal, whereas there had been no tokens of approbation in regard to himself, though, through many years, he had never transgressed his father's command. The father does not deny that he had been uniformly obedient, but shows, if we may use such expression, that he was better off than the younger son, whose return had been the occasion of the offensive rejoicing. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." The advantage is here certainly affirmed to be on the side of the son who had remained with the father, and not of him who had wandered and then repented. There were signs of great joy at the recovery of one who had been thought hopelessly lost; and the occasion warranted the manifestation of feeling. But it did not follow that the father regarded the prodigal with the approval and affection of which he would have been the object, had he never departed from his home. On the contrary, it is the elder son who

has the chief share in his favor and possessions. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." So that the parable, whilst offering every encouragement to a prodigal if he will arise and go to his father, is far enough from representing repentance as more acceptable to God than uniform obedience. You cannot read the parable of the prodigal son, and conclude from the readiness and gladness with which he is received, that it would have been better for the elder son had he joined his brother in his dissoluteness. The parable does every thing to induce you to return home, if it find you the prodigal. But since, notwithstanding the music and dancing with which the wanderer is welcomed, it still assigns to the elder son the more blessed portion, you are taught that, whatever the joy with which God receives home an exile, He rests with the greatest complacency on those of his creatures who have never transgressed.

In like manner, you may not affirm of the parable under review, that its representations at all give the preference to repentance over uniform obedience. Indeed, there is greater joy over the lost sheep when found, than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. But we are not told that the shepherd loves the lost sheep better than the rest, so that the wanderer has gained by his wanderings. We are told that the recovery of the one ministers more to the gladness of the owner than the permanence of the ninety and nine; but we are not told that if we would secure a large measure of favor and affection, it is better to be for a time the prodigal than always the obedient.

And in truth we may learn, from the workings of human affection, that the rejoicing more of the lost sheep than of the ninety and nine, proves not that the one is more beloved than the rest. If one member of his family be in sickness or danger, does not that one seem almost to engross the heart of the parent? are not the other members comparatively forgotten, so completely, for a while, are the thoughts absorbed in the suffering individual? It is not—and the fathers and mothers amongst you know that it is not—that the sick child is better loved than those which are in health. It is not that your affections are more

centered on the son who is far away amid the perils of the deep than on those who are sitting safely at your fireside. It is only that danger causes you to feel a special interest for the time in some one of your offspring—an interest which for the most part, ceases with the occasion, and which would be immediately transferred to another of the family, if that other were the subject of the peril. Oh, we quite believe that the mother, gazing on the child who seems about to be taken from her by death, is conscious of a feeling of passionate attachment which does not throb within her as she looks on her other little ones sleeping in their unbroken healthfulness. And if disease be suddenly arrested, and the child over whom she had wept in her agony smile on her again, and again charm her with its prattle, why we are persuaded that she will rejoice more of that child than of its brothers and its sisters, over whose beds she has never hung in anguish. Yet it is not that the one is dearer to her than the others. The probability of losing the one, whilst the others were safe, has caused a concentration of her solitudes and anxieties. But her heart is all the while as thoroughly devoted to those who need not the same intenseness of her maternal care; and you have only to suppose the sickness from which one child has recovered seizing on another, and presently you will see her centering on this other the same eager watchfulness; and for a time will there be again the same apparent absorption of the affections: and if again there be restoration to health, oh, again there will be the manifestations of an exuberant gladness, and the mother will rejoice more of the boy or the girl, who has been snatched back from the grave, than of those members of her household who have not approached its confines. But not, we again say, because she loves one child better than the rest,—not because the healthful must become the sick, in order to their being cherished and prized. Whatever her rapture on being told “thy son liveth,” the mother would far prefer the deep and unruffled tranquillity of a household not visited by danger and disease.

And thus also with regard to moral peril, which brings the case nearer to that of the parable under review. If one

member of a family grow up vicious and dissolute, whilst the others pursue steadfastly a course of obedience and virtue, it is not to be disputed that the thoughts of the parents will almost be engrossed by their profligate child, and that the workings of anxious affection will be more evident in regard of this prodigal than of the sons and the daughters who have given them no cause for uneasiness. Is it that they love the reckless better than the obedient? is it that they would love the obedient better, if they were turned into the reckless? You know that this is no true account of the matter. You know that the seeing what we love in danger, excites that interest on its behalf which we are scarcely conscious of, whilst we see it in security. The danger serves to bring out the affection, and to show us its depth; but it rather affords occasion of manifestation than increases the amount. And, beyond question, if the child whose perverseness and profligacy have disquieted the father and the mother, causing them anxious days and sleepless nights, turn from the error of his ways, and seek their forgiveness and blessing ere they die, there will be excited such emotions in their hearts as have never been stirred by the rectitude and obedience of the rest of their offspring. We are sure, that if you could contemplate the family on that happy day, when the long-vacant chair was occupied by the prodigal, you would observe that the eye of the parent glistened most, when it rested on the son who had drawn forth its tears; ay, and that when at night, ere they went to their rest, they knelt down together, and the old man invoked God's blessing on his household, the faltering words would be, and the deep emphasis would be, and the rich thankfulness would be, when he spake of a sheep that had been lost and was found, rather than when mentioning those which never went astray. Yet you would never think that the wanderer was better loved than his brethren. You would never think that the evident emotions of the parent, and the gushings of his heart towards his repentant child, and the more apparent hold which had been gained on his affections through separation and anxiety, might be inducements with the children who had never transgressed, to imitate their brother in his

rebellion and lawlessness. You would never come away from the survey of so beautiful a picture, the picture of a family gladdened by the presence of a long-absent member, a member whose name has been, perhaps, almost banished, as a forbidden thing, from the circle—so dishonored has it been, and so sullied;—the picture of a father and a mother, compensated for all their sorrows and prayers, by the return to their embrace and their household of the solitary alien who alone ever gave them pain, whilst brothers and sisters cluster round, and smile on the stranger, and breathe a deep welcome;—oh, we say, you would never come away from the survey of a picture, so rich in moral loveliness, with any lurking suspicion that repentance was preferable to unvaried obedience, or that the children might infer, from the unwonted joyousness of their parents, that their affections would be best gained by grieving them for a time, and then seeking their forgiveness.

And, in like manner, so far as we may carry up the illustration from the earthly to the heavenly, we deny, that, in representing God as rejoicing more over the recovered tribe than over those which never fell, we represent Him as better pleased with repentance than with uniform obedience. We do but ascribe to Him human emotions, just in order to show that there is a tenderness in Deity which makes Him solicitous, if the word be allowable, for those who have brought themselves into danger and difficulty, and which renders their deliverance an object of such mighty importance, that, when achieved, it may be said to minister more to his happiness than the homage of the myriads who never moved his displeasure. And when, through the energies of redemption, the human race was reinstated in the place whence it fell, it was not that God prefers the penitent to those who never swerved from allegiance, and has greater delight in men who have sinned, than in angels who have always obeyed; it was not on these accounts that He was more gladdened, as we suppose Him, by the recovery of what had wandered, than by the steadfastness of what remained. It was only because, where there has been ground of anxiety, and a beloved object has been in peril, his

restoration and safety open channels into which, for a while, the sympathies of the heart seem to pour all their fullness,—it was only on this account that, Divine things being illustrated by human, our Creator might be likened to a man, who having found on the mountains the one sheep he had lost, “rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.”

But we have yet to take a more confined view of the parable in question. We judge from its context, as given by St. Matthew, that Christ designed to indicate the carefulness of God in reference to the erring members of the Church, which is specially his flock. He is there speaking of the little ones, who are his disciples and followers; and the truth which He declares illustrated by the parable is, that it is not the will of the Father that “one of these little ones should perish.” So, then, we may regard the whole company of the faithful as the hundred sheep, and the one that wanders from the fold as that too frequent character which is spoken of in Scripture under the name of the backslider. God exercises a wonderful forbearance in respect of the backslider. The remonstrances of his Spirit, the warnings of his Providence, the exhortations of good men,—by all these does He urge upon him the necessity, if he would not be finally lost, of returning to the home he has left. And if the sheep, disappointed in its search after green spots in the wilderness, and torn with the briers of the world, hearken to the loving invitation, and suffer itself to be carried back to the fold, then it is not that God has greater affection towards the wanderer, than towards those who have been firm and consistent in religion: He does not prefer the backslider, when he has returned, to those who have always walked worthy of their vocation; and yet we may believe, that, since the backslider has been in danger, whilst other members of the flock have been in safety, the chief Shepherd will experience a delight in the restoration of the lonely outcast, which He does not gather from the abiding of the many who never leave his side; and that thus it will again come to pass, that He “rejoiceth more of the sheep that was lost, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.”

In like manner—and this is the case to which the parable seems applied by St. Luke—you may regard the whole human family as the flock, those who believe in the good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep as that portion of the flock which has been brought into the fold, those who are still practically strangers to Christ as the wanderers who are yet upon the mountains. And the Shepherd, who bought the flock with his blood, longs and strives to gather in these wanderers. He has no anxiety in respect of those who have entered the fold. In them He hath seen of the travail of his soul, and been satisfied. He is assured of their safety; and therefore are his thoughts, as yours would be, if one dear friend were in imminent peril, with the exiles who are far away in the wilds. The righteous, those who are justified by faith in his merits, “need no repentance;” they have already been converted; and though they daily commit offences, for which they should daily be humbled in contrition, they cannot again require that thorough change of mind which is what Scripture emphatically designates repentance. It is not then for the righteous, but for those who have never turned to God, that his solitudes are engaged. And who shall marvel, if, when a sinner repents, and obtains share in the succors of redemption, that Almighty Being who hath loved him, and watched for him, and sought him, should draw greater gladness from this accession to his fold, than from the numbers who have been long within its precincts? oh, who shall think it any proof of indifference to steadfast allegiance, and of a preference of repentance to uniform obedience, if he rejoice more of the sheep that was lost, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray?

And now, may we not say, that if the highest of created beings, nay, if the Creator Himself, may be set before us as eagerly intent on succoring the destitute, and upholding the weak, it must certainly be required of us, that we imitate, at whatever distance, the patterns thus presented, and seek assiduously that we be instruments in God’s hands for bringing into his fold the sheep yet upon the mountains? It is thus that our subject applies itself, forcibly, and at once, to the charitable cause which

we have to ask you to support. Unquestionably, if any class of persons may specially be described as little ones, left to wander, as sheep without a shepherd, on the bleak mountains of the earth, we may apply the expressions to young orphans, deprived of their natural guardians, and thrown on the compassions of strangers. And if, therefore, there be a case to which the touching lessons of the parable are peculiarly applicable, it is that of the children who now appeal to your bounty. We need not describe to you the deserted state of orphans, often left with no spot upon earth, but the grave of their parents, with which they can feel any natural association. We need not strive to paint to you the desolate condition of a family, from which sickness or accident has suddenly removed the head; the dreariness of the widow, as she rises from the corpse of her husband, looks through her tears on her boys and her girls, and thinks that he who loved them, and labored for them, and brought them their bread, has embraced them for the last time, and left them in utter destitution. The most affecting of all spectacles, in a world which presents every variety of wretchedness, is that of a household from which death has removed the only barrier against poverty, the family group weeping over the coffin which contains the single friend to whom they could look up for support. Oh! the very youngest, yet too young to know their loss, mingle their tears with the elders, as though our nature instinctively recoiled from the fearful loneliness of the orphan. Certainly you will not deny that here are the little ones, left upon the mountains, without a shelter, without a shepherd. And if it be a duty to seek the wandering, to direct them into safe paths, to provide that they be brought, if possible, within the fold of our heavenly Father, you must feel that it is in regard of these sheep; so that to be neglectful of the orphan, is to put from us the lessons which the parable before us so impressively inculcates.

And we thank God that we can affirm of our metropolis, that amongst its noble institutions which propose the relief of the varieties of human wretchedness, it numbers asylums for the orphan. The benevolent, whilst crowning this city with its most glorious

diadem, the diadem not of castle and palace, but of refuges which are as castles, and of hospitals which are as palaces, have not failed to make that diadem complete in its beauty, by rearing structures which may give shelter to the fatherless. Of late years several institutions have arisen for orphans; but none more worthy of the succor of Englishmen than that of which I now stand as advocate. The name pleads the cause—"the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum." The Orphans of seamen! Shame upon the Briton who cares not for the sailor: our country sits a queen upon the waves, and it is mainly to our seamen that, under God, she owes her greatness and her majesty. The orphans of merchant seamen—those seamen who carry on the commerce, rather than fight the battles, of England, who do not, therefore, establish any claim, whether for themselves or their children, on the national institutions, but whose services are not less arduous, not less dangerous, not less important, than if they were engaged in pouring the thunders of war on the foes who would dispute with us the empire of the seas. It is for the orphans of merchant seamen that we now ask your bounty—the orphans of the men who bear our manufactures to every land, and bring into our ports the productions of every soil; who carry out the Bibles and the missionaries through which we look for a shaking of the whole system of heathenism; who, if not actually engaged in fighting our battles, compose the body from which, if the demons of war were again let loose, must be draughted the thousands who would man those mighty vessels which now sleep idly on their shadows, and guide them to the triumphs of another Nile and another Trafalgar. Ay, it is for the orphans of men such as these that the Asylum whose cause I now plead throws open its doors. And as I stand here, and can almost look on that finest spectacle which our metropolis presents, the forests of masts which rises, far as the eye can reach, from its noble river, I cannot but feel how many wives of merchant seamen there must be who turn pale when they hear the fury of the storm, and remember how the fathers of their children are far away on the surges of the deep; how often must

come tidings of shipwreck which tell the wife that she is a widow, that the one whom she best loved has gone down with the waves for his winding-sheet, and that her children must be henceforward destitute! Oh, not so; English benevolence, your benevolence, will forbid this; and the distracted mother shall be comforted, and shall know that you have helped to provide a home for her orphans.

I preach to you on a day which will be held in remembrance for centuries to come, yea, whilst England is a nation, and there is one of her children still left upon the globe. Remember ye not that on this day was fought the most important of battles on this day was won the noblest of the victories which have shed an imperishable glory over the land of our birth! On this day it was that a British general and a British army worsted the power of France, and achieved, on the plain of Waterloo, peace for distracted Europe. How can the anniversary of the day occur, and not wake in English hearts glorious recollections, and emotions of rich thankfulness to that Being "unto whom belong the shields of the earth?" The thunder of the war comes rolling upon fancy's ear; the rushing, mingling squadrons pass before fancy's eye; and the God of battles compels the proud conqueror in a hundred campaigns to crouch and flee before our own immortal chieftain.

But what has the victory of Waterloo to do with the cause for which I now plead! Every thing. This victory opened to England the commerce of the world. This victory caused that every sea should be dotted with our ships. This victory multiplied a thousandfold our merchant seamen. This victory multiplied, I cannot tell you in what proportion, the orphans of merchant seamen. Then I may call upon you, by the shades of those who fell at Waterloo, by the memory of the brave fellows who, as on this day, set themselves as a rampart against your foes, and secured by their valor and their blood your cities and your valleys from hostile aggression, to give liberally to the institution which now appeals for support. I am bold to say that the hurricane and the battle, the ocean with its crested billows, and war with its magnificently stern retinue, meet and mingle to give force to our

appeal. It is an appeal from stranded navies; but it is echoed also from the mounds of slaughtered battalions who, on the recurrence of this day, seem to wheel about us in pale procession, to admonish us of our debt of gratitude, and to entreat us not to desert those who are widowed and orphaned through their victory.

What need we add more? We will plead for the Asylum which now solicits support, on the principle that God has revealed Himself under the character of a Father of the fatherless, and that the visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction is a main part of the scriptural definition of undefiled religion. Oh, what was this world but an orphaned world? what was our race but a race deprived of its natural guardian, when God sent his own Son to seek and to save that which was lost? Had there been no mercy for orphans, no compassion for the shipwrecked, then must we all have remained for ever on the mountains of tribulation. But there was mercy for orphans; there was compas-

sion for the shipwrecked: the Almighty, by a marvellous exertion of loving-kindness, threw open an asylum large enough for the whole human race, and made provision that every child of calamity and sin might flee, if he would, to its magnificent shelter. And now so much having been done for ourselves, shall we not be diligent in our endeavors to prove that we are not unmindful of the example left us by our Redeemer? Oh, we cannot, as He did, touch the bier, and give back the child to the embrace of the widowed mother; but we can comfort the widow's heart by snatching her child from a darker estate than the grave; we can provide an asylum for that child, within whose walls it may be trained for admission to those mansions which Christ hath reared for the righteous—yea, we may be instrumental in fetching home at least one little lamb which must otherwise wander in the desert; and it should animate us to know that God will rejoice more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

S E R M O N X I. *

BROKEN CISTERNS.

* For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—JEREMIAH II. 13.

It would ill become me as a minister of the Established and Protestant Church of this kingdom to address you on the present anniversary, without referring to those two great events which have been commemorated in the services of the day. Though not a friend to the

keeping up observances which might only be calculated to the keeping up irritated feelings, far less would I be a friend to the ceasing to give thanks for a great national deliverance, or to acknowledge a great religious benefit. And far less would I be silent when silence might be construed into an admission of there being no important difference between Protestantism and

* Preached at Camden Chapel, on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot.

Popery, of its being time that we freed ourselves from the bigotry of our forefathers, and looked with less dislike, or less fear, on the Roman Catholic religion. The two events which are this day commemorated stand closely associated, as you must all be aware, with the Protestantism of England. On this day was to have been carried into execution that most diabolical scheme, ever since known as the Gunpowder Plot, which was to have destroyed at one moment the king, lords, and commons of this realm, and thus have made a clear scene for papal intrigue and papal domination. On this same day, but after an interval of seventy-three years, did William prince of Orange, the son-in-law of James II., land in our country, summoned by the people, who saw that their king was bent on re-establishing Popery, and who felt that in so doing he would rob them of all that was most precious.

It is evident that in thankfully acknowledging these events, we acknowledge it as an incalculable blessing that Protestantism has been upheld in this kingdom, and Popery not been suffered to regain the ascendancy. The observance of the day is a national recognition of the great principles of the Reformation, and as such offers an important opportunity to the Protestant clergy of reminding their hearers what those principles were, and of entreating them to take heed that they desert them not, as though Popery were changed, and no longer to be dreaded. We would not fail to embrace this opportunity. We shall say nothing at present as to whether there be aught in the aspect of the times to make it specially important that every due occasion be taken of impressing upon Protestants their peculiar duties and privileges. But at least, if the Reformation were worth achieving, and if it be worth maintaining, the present institution deserves to be solemnly kept; and we shall accordingly proceed, without further preface, to the addressing you on topics which we have described as appropriate to such an anniversary. Our text will, we think, furnish us with the fitting material. They are the words of God Himself, upbraiding the Jews with deserting his worship and embracing idolatry. And so appalling did such an act of

national apostacy appear in the eyes of the Almighty Himself, that He introduces its mention by a solemn appeal to the heavens—whether the firmament, with its many worlds which, inanimate though they were, might almost be considered as roused into listening when a thing so atrocious had to be told; or angels, those radiant intelligences, who, with all their gloriousness, were intent on promoting the happiness of men. “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.”

It must indeed be something extraordinary in wickedness which is introduced by such an address to the heavens. Yet it is that whereof we ourselves are in much danger of being guilty. It is that, we are bold at once to say, whereof we should be guilty if, having been delivered from the yoke and trammels of Popery, we should suffer ourselves to be again entangled and brought into bondage. For if it were a less open, it would not, we are persuaded, be a less actual abandonment of the fountain of living waters for “broken cisterns which can hold no water,” were a people, privileged with the reformed religion, to lapse into Romanism, than it was when Israel of old forsook the institutions of Moses, and did homage at the altars of Baal and Ashtaroth. And this at once opens before you the special point of view under which we would have our text considered on the present occasion. It will become us indeed, in the first place, to treat it more generally, lest you fall into the error of supposing that it is only by turning Papists that you can imitate the conduct so sternly denounced in the Israelites. Afterwards we shall endeavor to engage your attention with such contrasts between the Reformed Church and the Roman as might justify our accommodating the text to Protestants who should become Papists. Thus, then, our topics of discourse are sufficiently defined. In the first place, we are to examine how the two evils here denounced may be committed generally by all men; in the second place, how they may be committed particularly by Protestants: we are to examine, that is, how, in the first place, as the creatures of God, and how, in the second, as members of a Reformed Church, we

are in danger of so acting that the heavens may be called upon to be astonished, yea, horribly afraid and very desolate, seeing that we shall have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to ourselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Now whilst there are two evils distinctly specified in the text, we are not to suppose that they are ever committed separately, the one without the other: no man forsakes the living fountain who does not also hew out the broken cistern—for there is a search after happiness in which all men naturally, and even necessarily, engage; and if they do not seek happiness in God, where alone it may be found, they will inevitably seek it in the creature, though only to be cheated and disappointed. And God gives a most emphatic and comprehensive description of Himself, when He calls Himself "the fountain of living waters"—"the fountain," in that He has all being, all grace in Himself, in that He is the source of all existence, the spring of all enjoyment: the fountain of "living waters," inasmuch as there are no waters but in and from Him to slake the thirst of the soul, the immortal principle, whose cravings are not to be appeased but by that which hath "life in itself."

But if a "fountain of living waters" most accurately describe the Creator, then may all created good, as distinguished from, or set in opposition to, the Creator, be with equal accuracy described as "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water:" in the first place, as "cisterns" because of small capacity, and containing nothing but what is derived from another; in the second place, as "broken" cisterns, forasmuch as sin has marred the choicest vessels which the Almighty's hand wrought; in the third place, as cisterns "that will hold no water," seeing that they can afford no real, no constant, no satisfying comfort: there is in them but enough to mock the thirst; and he who thinks to take a full draught finds that the water has leaked through and left his wants unsupplied. Yet notwithstanding that these several truths are attested by universal experience—for who ever sought happiness in the Creator, and did not find it? who ever sought happiness in the creature, and did not

miss it?—there is continually going on the same forsaking of the fountain, the same hewing out of the cistern, which are so pathetically and indignantly denounced in the text. "Man still walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain:" in spite of a thousand demonstrations that he has been made for God, and that in God alone can he find what shall be adequate to his capacity, how will he pursue what must escape him, and toil for what must deceive! There is something very striking in the expression "hewed them out cisterns." What labor does it indicate, what effort, what endurance! You seem to behold men in the very quarry, grappling with the huge rocks, and applying all their skill and their sinew to the fashioning reservoirs which, so fast as they are formed, are found to have flaws, so that the labor is thrown away, and the task has again to be begun. "Hewed them out cisterns." Had the cisterns been ready made to their hands, there had not been so much with which to upbraid them, or for which to reprove. But God has caused that it shall be actually a toilsome thing for men to seek happiness in the creature. Witness the diggings, so to speak, of avarice: witness the painful climbings of ambition: witness the disgusts and disappointments of sensuality. You have to "hew out" the cisterns—and even this were little: the material is fragile as well as hard; and what you shape you also shatter.

Were not this so well known, we might almost say self-evident, there might comparatively be some excuse for the continued endeavor to obtain from created things the material of happiness. But observe how God makes it an aggravation of the sin of his being forsaken, that He is forsaken for that which must demand toil, and then yield disappointment. He sets the "fountain of living waters" in contrast with "broken cisterns"—as though He would point out the vast indignity offered Him, in that what was preferred was so unworthy and insufficient. It is the language not only of jealousy—of jealousy in that refined yet terrible sense in which Holy Scripture applies it unto God—but of jealousy stung to the very quick by the baseness of the object to which the plighted affection has been unblushingly transferred. Had it been fountain

against fountain, had there been any place for comparison, so that men might have wavered as to where the living waters were, there had been less to move a jealous God. But the cistern, the cistern that has to be hewn out, the broken cistern, the cistern that can hold no water—to be forsaken for this—“Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth.” Ah, my brethren, this is the last thing which gives such an emphasis to the passage. God speaks *of* his people as offering Him this indignity; but He does not speak *to* his people. No, He addresses Himself rather to the inanimate, the irrational. He tells his grievance to the material creation, as though even that were more likely to feel and resent it than the beings who were actually guilty of the sin. And ye who are setting up idols for yourselves, ye who, in spite of every demonstration of the uselessness of the endeavor, are striving to be happy without God, we will not reason with you: it were like passing too slight censure on your sin, it were representing it as less blinding, less besotting, than it actually is, to suppose that you would attend to, or feel the force of, an ordinary remonstrance. But if ye have done, or if ye are doing, this thing—if there be those of you who worship the images which the madness of practical atheism hath set up, leaving the Creator for the creature, making gold your trust, or distinction your aim, or pleasure your God, stand ye indeed apart: ye are scarcely to be regarded as exercising the faculties of rational beings; some demon hath bewitched you, so monstrous is the cheat which you are putting on yourselves. Shall a fellow-man argue with you, as though he thought to convince you, when the thing which you practically deny is, that the soul is larger than any finite good? the thing which you practically affirm, that the shadow is the substance, the phantom the reality? Nay, we had better do as is done in our text. It may move you more, ye worshippers of visible things, to find yourselves treated as past being reasoned with, than flattered with addresses which suppose in you the full play of the understanding and the judgment. Ye will not hearken: “Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle:” but there

are those who witness and wonder at your madness: the visible universe, as if amazed at finding itself searched for that which its own sublime and ceaseless proclamations declare to be nowhere but in God, assumes a listening posture; and whilst the Almighty publishes your infatuation, your baseness, in that ye have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out broken cisterns, He hath secured Himself an audience, “whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear;” for the accusation is not uttered till there have been this astounding call: “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.”

But let us proceed to the case which is perhaps still more distinctly contemplated by the passage before us—that of the abandonment of the true religion for a false. Undoubtedly the preference of the creature to the Creator as a source of happiness, which is what we have just been considering, is but too apt an illustration of the forsaking of the fountain of living waters, and the hewing out cisterns that can hold no water. But it is not precisely that with which the Jews were then chargeable; or rather, it is not that with which they were then chargeable; or rather, it is not that with which they were then more immediately charged: it is the changing the object of religious worship, the leaving the true God, the God of their fathers, for the idols of the heathen, which forms, as you may easily see from the context, the burden of the present accusation. And now you are all alive, as though this must have brought us to that point in our discourse, at which Protestantism is to be the fountain of living waters, and Popery the broken cistern. You are impatient to be there: men are marvellously fond of hearing their own system praised, and an opposite denounced. But we are not yet at this point of discourse. We have a few more general truths to settle and exhibit, before we attempt a contrast between the Reformed Church and the Roman. There are many ways wherein the thing complained of in the text may be done, though men continue within the pale and profession of Protestantism.

If ever God discovered Himself as a

“fountain of living waters,” it was when, in the person of his own Divine Son, He opened on this earth a “fountain for sin and for uncleanness.” Providing, in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, an expiation for human guilt, and in the gift of his Holy Spirit, which was one result of the Mediator’s interference, a renewal of human nature, He fulfilled to the letter the prophetic promise, “I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” This earth was indeed a wilderness; and every thing therein was dried up and parched, as though there had passed over it—as truly there had—the breath of its Maker’s indignation: but there came to it one, human in form, but divine in person; and through what He performed, and what He endured, living streams gushed forth; and the thirsty might everywhere drink and be refreshed, the polluted everywhere wash and be clean. The justifying virtue of the work of the Redeemer, the sanctifying of that of the Spirit—these include every thing of which, as sinful but immortal beings, we can have need: by the former we may have title to the Kingdom of Heaven, and by the latter be made meet for the glorious inheritance. That God “hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”—here truly is the sum and substance of the Gospel; and whosoever, conscious of his sinfulness, and intent on learning how he may be saved, hath had these words brought home to him “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” oh, he can testify that not to the traveller on the burning desert is the bubbling fountain more eloquent of life, than the Gospel, thus gathered into a sentence, to the wanderer who feels condemned by the law. Nevertheless, can it be said that men in general are ready to close with the Gospel, to partake of it as the parched traveller of the spring found amid the sands? Alas, “who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” The invitation is going forth, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;” but it has to be accompanied with the ancient remonstrance, “why do ye spend money

for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” Labor is thus thrown away: cisterns are “hewn out.” Even where religion is not neglected, what pains are bestowed on the making some system less distasteful to pride, or more complacent to passion, than practical, unadulterated Christianity! What costly effort is given to the compounding the human with the Divine, our own merit with that of Christ; or to the preparing ourselves for the reception of grace, as though it were not grace *by* which, as well as *for* which, we are prepared, grace which must fashion the vessel, as well as grace which must fill it. Truly the cistern is “hewn out,” when the fountain is forsaken. Let Christ be unto you “all in all,” “made unto you of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” and the fountain gives a river which, like the rock struck in Horeb, never ceaseth to make glad the believer. But turn away, though by a single step, from Christ, and, oh, the toil, the dissatisfaction, of endeavoring to make—what? “a broken cistern,” “a cistern that can hold no water”—if creature comforts are such cisterns to those who seek happiness, creature systems must be to those who seek immortality.

For what shall endure the severity of God’s scrutiny, but that which is itself of God’s appointing and providing? Subject, so to speak, one of your cisterns to his inspection, whether repentance as supposed to be necessarily efficacious to forgiveness, or good works considered as meritorious, or his own mercy as too great to take vengeance—and how He will look it through! how full of flaws will it become! how utterly incapable of holding any thing but that wine of his wrath, of whose dregs you read in the Book of Psalms, dregs which, if we may use such expression, may prevent the wine’s escaping, filling up the fissures, but only that you may have always whereof you must drink, but never wherewith you may slake your thirst. But shall we wonder then, that God denounces, in terms so reproachful and indignant, the leaving the fountain, and the hewing out the cistern? the substituting for the simple, unadulterated Gospel of Christ, any of those devices of reason, or creations of

pride, to which some would have recourse for motive to duty, strength in trial, comfort in sorrow, hope in death? Shall we wonder, that as if, where such a thing could be done, it were idle to expect that its enormity should be felt, He appeals, not to earth, but to heaven, for an audience? appeals, and in what terms? "Be horribly afraid, ye heavens; be ye very desolate." One is staggered by such expressions—the heavens called on to be "very desolate," as if they were likely to be unpeopled, kept empty, through this hewing out of broken cisterns. The broken cistern below is the unfilled mansion above. Oh, if ye would do your part towards the occupancy of Heaven, if ye would be there yourselves, and so rather prevent vacancy, or leave not vacancy to be filled by such as were not "children of the kingdom," take heed that ye suffer not yourselves to be drawn aside from Christ; admit no system of theology of which Christ, Christ crucified, Christ glorified, is not the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And let it warn you of the peril of missing Heaven—not through idleness, not through indifference; this is not the case contemplated, the idle man is not in the quarry, "hewing out the cistern"—out through misapplied energy, through misdirected endeavor—let it warn you of the peril of this, that the heavens are called on to be "very desolate"—ay, "very desolate;" interpret it how you will, whether as emptying themselves of their shining hosts to behold the most astounding and afflicting of spectacles, or as likely to remain unoccupied through so sad and fatal an apostasy—the heavens are called on to be "very desolate," when God's people are to be charged with having forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves cisterns that can hold no water.

Now this naturally brings us to that particular application of the text which seems required by the present anniversary. If the thing generally denounced in the passage before us be the abandonment of the true religion, for one either wholly false, or with admixtures of error, the denunciation must include the case of the forsaking the communion of a pure, Apostolical, Church, for that of a corrupt and idolatrous. But before

such a case can be admitted to be that of leaving the Reformed Church, and joining the Roman, it will justly be required that the doctrines of the two Churches be set in opposition, or contrast, that so it may be seen whether in the one there be free access to the fountain of living waters, whilst in the other men are left to the hewing out broken cisterns, that can hold no water. We cannot expect, within such limits as are now left us, to draw out this contrast in all its extent and variety. But we may seize on leading facts, on prominent doctrines; and placing these the one against the other, do enough to the vindicating what we claim for Protestantism, and to the proving what we charge upon Popery.

We pray you at once, and at the outset, to observe that we use the term Protestantism as defining in one great respect the character of the Anglican Church. And I will not shrink from the term Protestant, as though I thought it unbecoming a branch of Christ's "holy Catholic Church." Not that I glory in belonging to a protesting Church; I grieve too deeply that there should be errors, gross, fatal, errors, against which to protest. I glory in belonging to an Apostolic Church; I lament that such a Church is compelled to be protestant; but we cannot, of ourselves, part with our protesting character; the Roman Church must take that from us, and how? by violence? God helping, we will imitate our fathers, and deliver our protest in the face of persecution and death. By our returning into communion with the Roman Church, the Roman Church as it is? No, no: I trust we may say, we "have not so learned Christ." We will cease to be Protestants, when the Roman Church renounces the abominations against which we protest; till then, we must keep the name, we must keep the thing. As to that of which one has heard, of which one has read, unprotestantizing the Church, God in his mercy forbid this: we will pray, we will labor, to reform the Roman communion; better die than consent to Romanize the Reformed.

But if we are, if we must be, a protesting Church, let us understand thoroughly what it is against which we protest. We protest, not against the

Roman Church, as though it were not, equally with our own, Apostolic in constitution, a branch of that Catholic Church in whose existence we profess belief whenever we repeat the creed. But we protest against numerous and grievous corruptions of primitive Christianity, which the Roman Church retains, and of which, through the blessing of God on the labors of confessors and martyrs, our own Church was enabled to rid herself at the Reformation. We protest against the doctrine of the pope's infallibility: unwarranted by Scripture, disproved by facts, it offers the Divine sanction to every error which an ignorant man may adopt, and to every practice which a vicious may enjoy. We protest against what we are forced to call the idolatry of the Papists; idolatry is the great plague-spot of Romanism: let them explain, let them excuse, let them extenuate, how they will, their gestures, their hymns, their prayers, are witnesses that they offer to the creature the worship which is due only to the Creator. We protest against the doctrine of transubstantiation, that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are actually turned into Christ's flesh and blood: if it were not contradicted by our senses, it is fatal to the Gospel; for, making Christ's body infinite and omnipresent, it interferes with the truth of our Saviour's human nature. We protest against what is called the sacrifice of the mass; for we hold that Christ was offered once for all, and that it is impious to speak of repeating the oblation. We protest against the Romish doctrine of justification. The Papists mix up human merits with Christ's; they draw distinctions between venial and mortal sins; they introduce a whole train of subordinate mediators; and thus have so darkened the Gospel with fables and inventions, and substituted for the simple mode of acceptance by faith in the Redeemer, a complicated of their own, that, if they do not shut heaven against those who would enter, it is wondrous how any find the way of admission. We protest against the doctrine of purgatory; we protest against multiplied sacraments; against the withholding the cup from the laity; against keeping the Bible from the common people; against praying in an unknown tongue; against the tyrannies and in-

decencies of the confessional. We protest against all these; though there may not be in all the same amount of error, there is in all much that is opposed to pure Christianity, and much that is likely to place the soul in peril. And even this rapid enumeration of subjects of protest may suffice to prove of the Reformed Church, that it has free access "to the fountain of living waters," whilst the Roman is hewing out "broken cisterns that can hold no water." The Bible, translated with all possible care, and given to every man to read, study, and pray over for himself; the Gospel, proclaimed in its simplicity; the sacrifice of Christ presented as the alone procuring cause of our reconciliation; faith, the instrument of justification; holiness, the necessary produce of faith; unmutated sacraments; the ordinances of religion all administered in the vulgar tongue; having these privileges, hearing these truths, the members of the Reformed Church, we are bold to declare, have nothing to impede, but every thing to facilitate, their taking of those waters, whereof whosoever drinketh, he shall not taste death. But look on the other side of the picture;—the Bible jealously guarded, only doled out bit by bit, at the will, and with the interpretation, of an interested priesthood; no common prayer, or public worship, properly so called, for that is not common prayer in which the people cannot join; one-half of the blessed Communion denied to the people, so that it is doubtful, to say the least, whether they receive the Holy Sacrament; the "one Mediator between God and man" kept at such a distance, and made so difficult of approach, that you can only reach Him through the intercession of angels and saints; the pardon of sin so involved in difficulties, and complicated with subtleties, that the penitent must be tortured with doubts whilst he lives, and hope, at best, for mitigated punishment when he dies; fastings, scourgings, watchings, and multiplied austerities, imposed as a meritorious and expiatory endurance, and not as a merely wholesome and subjugatory discipline,—oh! is this what they would give us as the birthright, the inheritance of the children of God? What do all these make up, if not a system of broken cisterns? What water

can these hold for a thirsty soul? And, though broken, with what infinite pains have these cisterns been constructed! How true is it that they have been "hewn out." Truth was not corrupted in a single day, nor by a single act, nor by a single agent. It took centuries to build up this fatal system. The angel of darkness labored at it, but commonly under the disguise of an angel of light. Men of high but misdirected intellect; reason, in her unchastened boldness; pride, in its unchecked presumption; ambition, that spurned all restraint; power, that would brook no control; these all gave themselves to the colossal work: and when Christianity came forth, beaten, darkened, ground, mutilated into Popery, oh, it was throned on high places, and it was shrined beneath magnificent domes, and it glittered with splendor; but it was just the simple made intricate at incalculable cost, and the precious which infinite pains had been taken to spoil.

The cisterns were "hewn out;" the noble block, which had only to be touched by the rod of the believer, and oh! how the living waters leaped from it, was laboriously chiselled into petty receptacles: fragments were broken off, and substituted for the whole; the chalice and the cup, wrought by human skill, if of Divine material, elaborated till it was scarce possible to recognize the original substance, distorted so studiously in form that the thirsty lip could hardly find where to place itself, and some flaw so ingeniously concealed, that, while the water oozed away, the vessel still seemed entire,—ah! this was Popery, this is Popery. Miserable comforters, broken cisterns! Is this what we are to have in place of the exulting, the abounding, river which makes glad our Jerusalem, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?" Men and brethren, compare the systems, compare the Churches, compare them in the light of Holy Scripture, and of Catholic antiquity, and you shall find no apter saying, than that, in the Reformed Church, Christianity gushes from the fountain; in the Roman, it is poured into broken cisterns.

And shall we leave the fountain for the cistern? Indeed there are some

who would persuade us even to this: and there are others who would disguise or smooth away the differences between our own Church and the Roman, trying to persuade us that it is little more than prejudice which prevents our being at peace. God forbid that we should hearken to any such deceivers. The worst thing done in these days of theological bitterness and strife is, that sound Church principles are being brought into disrepute by their advocates, as though in upholding them it were needful either to put contempt on the Reformation, or to pay compliments to Romanism. Perish the principles, if principles they could be called, which are to be defended by decrying those who reformed our Church, and flattering those who corrupted it. But this is not sound, this is not consistent, this is not high Churchmanship. The true Churchman feels that there is a vast gulph between him and the Papist—I do not say an impassable gulph; but the Papist must come over to him; he must not take a step towards the Papist; the Churchman made the gulph by putting from him certain errors and corruptions; and the Papist must destroy the gulph by putting them from him too. And if, in spite of what we know Popery to have been, and of what we know it to be, we would indulge any thought of reunion with the Roman Church, except through that Church's rejecting what we rejected when we separated from it—then might it be vain to look for audience amongst ourselves as the projected apostasy were denounced, so besotted must we be, so bent on our own undoing. But there shall not be wanting listeners, amazed and frightened listeners: the very heavens, that have gathered to themselves the "noble company of martyrs," shall be astonished, and horribly afraid, and very desolate, and all because the purposed crime may justly be described as the forsaking the fountain of living waters for "broken cisterns that can hold no water."

And now one brief word in conclusion with regard to the present anniversary. We cannot consider the Gunpowder plot, merely as having been the treasonable scheme of a disaffected few, though we know, from historical documents, that not more than eighty persons were in any degree privy to it. The

great thing to be observed is, that undoubtedly the object of this plot was the re-establishment of Popery. The chief leaders, such as Catesby and Piercy, were irritated at finding that Roman Catholics were not treated with greater indulgence by James I., from whom, as the descendant of the Scottish Mary, they had expected such concessions as they had not obtained from his predecessor Elizabeth. When they found these expectations disappointed, they resolved on an act which should not only be one of terrible vengeance, but which, by removing the chief foes to their religion, should make way for its speedy and triumphant re-establishment. And in all human probability Protestantism would have been buried with our princes and nobles beneath the ruins of the parliament-house, had the daring incendiary completed his work—even as it would have lost its ascendancy had not William III. taken the sceptre from his father-in-law's hand. Therefore should we join heartily in the thanksgiving of the day, and consider that the commemorated events are such as should be held in lasting and grateful remembrance. For we are not yet, we trust, come as a nation to the point at which sight is lost of the worth of the Reformation. We are not yet prepared to believe that it was for trivial and speculative points that our fathers gave themselves readily to the rack and the stake. We may have forgotten our privileges in the day of our security; but let Protestantism be assailed, whether from without or from within—and I am not the one to deny, however to deplore, that the assault may be from within as well as from without—and I think, and I trust, that something of the same spirit will be roused in the land as though an invader's foot were on its shore, or a traitor in its councils.

But let an anniversary such as this set each of us to the diligently examining what Protestantism is, that we may know our advantages, the responsibilities which they entail, and the duties which they involve. We have the fountain of living waters. It is well that we carefully guard it: but do we also eagerly

drink of it? We are not forced to seek water from broken cisterns. It is well that we expose the worthlessness of these cisterns; but do we remember that which St. Paul says to the Hebrews, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should *let them slip?*" the marginal reading is, "lest at any time we should *let them run out*" as leaking vessels. We ourselves may be the broken cisterns, receiving grace but only to lose it. Let us look to it then, that we be earnest, decided, consistent Protestants. But such Protestantism is for exhibition in the life, rather than for declamation on the platform. It is a real tract for the times, "Known and read of all men." Profounder humility, heartier charity, more expansive benevolence, a more devoted consecration to the service of God—it is by these that Protestantism will be truly upheld, preserved to ourselves, transmitted to our children. Popery is not to be written down; it is to be lived down: and if we are to lose the advantages of the Reformation of the national Church, it will be mainly through the want of reformation in the national character. Each, then, as he strives to live more "holily, justly, and unblameably," in the world, is doing his part towards preserving to his country that Protestantism which, under God, is verily its shield, its palladium. Each, on the other hand, as he suffers himself to be inflamed with evil passions, cherishing, or not striving to quench, the fires of lust, is, in his measure, the conspirator who would ignite a train charged with destruction to our laws, our liberties, our religion. Depart, then, resolving, in the strength of the living God, to be more thorough Christians than you have hitherto been. This is the great practical use to be made of such a commemoration as the present. There is a Gunpowder plot to be detected and defeated: you must detect it by searching the dark recesses of the heart; you must defeat it by letting your light shine more brightly than ever before men.

S E R M O N X I I . *

THE MACEDONIAN PHANTOM.

* And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them."—Acts xvi. 9, 10.

The Apostles, and first preachers of Christianity, differed greatly from ourselves, in that they were endowed with extraordinary gifts, and miraculous powers. But it is distinctly to be observed, that they were not, on this account, exempt from the necessity of exercising faith. It might have been thought, that, possessed as they were of superhuman might, and privileged with immediate revelations of the will of God, there would have been, in their case, but little opportunity or demand for that trust, or dependence, which is among the chief things required from ourselves. But God so ordered his dealings with them, that, notwithstanding their wondrous endowments, they appear to have had the same life to lead as any one of us, who, always in weakness, and often in darkness, must labor at duty, and submit to trial. That the Apostles were able to work miracles, did not secure to them the supply even of their daily wants. St. Paul, in reckoning up to the Corinthians his multiplied endurances in the cause of the Gospel, enumerates "hunger, and thirst, and fastings;" and you will all remember how this Apostle, anxious to prevent his being burdensome to the churches which he had planted, wrought at the business of a tentmaker, and thus earned what was necessary for his subsistence. It was a strange, but an instructive, spectacle, that of a man who could heal the sick, and raise the dead, obliged to labor, like a common artizan, in order to the

procuring a meal. Would not the energy, which sufficed for so many and greater wonders, have availed to the obtaining, without all this drudgery, the supply of every-day wants? But God, we may believe, in order to keep his servant dependent on himself, would not allow him to exercise, on his own behalf, the powers which were so mighty in subjugating the world; but, whilst He enabled him to shake the vast fabric of heathenism, and placed, in a certain sense, all the elements of nature under his control, obliged him to be industrious, in order to the warding off starvation, and required from him all that diligent and faithful use of instituted means, which is required from the lowest and weakest of his people.

Then, again, it is true that Apostles had the gift of prophecy, and that, privileged with immediate revelation, they knew far more than common men of the will and purposes of the Almighty. But it is very observable, that this their insight into futurity was no more allowed than their power of working miracles, to destroy, or even to diminish, the necessity for the exertion of faith in regard of themselves. You might have thought that men, gifted with the faculty of anticipating events, and determining long beforehand what God had appointed to take place, would never have been at any loss with regard to their own plans, but would have been saved all that doubt and perplexity in which we ourselves are necessarily involved, from not knowing what a day may bring forth. Yet this was far from being the case. The Apostles appear to have had just

* Preached at York on behalf of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

our trials of faith; they were called upon for the same patient waiting on God, the same watching the leadings of his Providence, the same studying the minute indications of his will. Able to pierce futurity, and discern "the man of sin," opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, St. Paul was nevertheless unable to make arrangements for a journey, with any certainty that he should be allowed to accomplish it. Hear how he speaks to the Thessalonians: "Therefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." He had often, you see, desired and planned a visit to Thessalonica; but, as often, some obstacle had arisen, which had been as completely unforeseen by him as though the gift of prophecy had in no degree been possessed. Thus, as with the gift of miracles, so with that of prophecy, God allowed nothing to interfere with simple, prayerful, dependence upon Himself. He brought it to pass that those whom He enabled to marshal before them the august and awful occurrences of distant centuries, should, in their private capacity, be as thoroughly obliged to the "walking by faith, not by sight," as any one of ourselves from whom the future veils all its secrets, except those which prophets have been commissioned to announce.

If you look at the verses which immediately precede our text, you will find abundant evidence that St. Paul and his companions were required, like ourselves, to go forward in faith, uninformed as to the precise course which God would have them take, but acting on the assurance that He directs the steps of all such as commit themselves to his guidance. In the sixth verse you read, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." Their intention had evidently been "to preach the word in Asia;" but they were not allowed to carry their intention into effect; God interfered to prevent it: St. Paul had, no doubt, prayed to be directed aright; but to keep faith in exercise, he was permitted, in the first instance, to determine wrong. Then in the next verse you read, "After they were come to Mysia they assayed to

go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Still, you see, they are only as men feeling their way: it seemed to them, that Asia being closed, Bithynia presented the most desirable field of labor, and accordingly they took measures for entering that province. But again they were proved wrong: it was not to Bithynia that God meant them to turn; and they are still in doubt as to what course to pursue. At last, there is granted unto Paul the vision recorded in our text, from which he is enabled assuredly to gather that the Lord designed him to preach in Macedonia. Yet, what a roundabout method this seems of communicating information: what delay, what loss of time! Why was not the Apostle, in the first instance, explicitly told what the will of God was, in place of being left to make useless plans as to Asia and Bithynia? and why, at last, was he only taught through the medium of a vision, which might have admitted of diverse interpretations, and in regard of which there might even have been doubt whether it was indeed to be received as a communication from God? We will not say that such questions can be satisfactorily answered; we will not even say that they can with propriety be put. But at least we may gather a lesson for ourselves from what is thus recorded of St. Paul. We see that even St. Paul was thrown upon his faith; that he had to find out the will of God by successive experiments; that the leadings of God's providence, in regard even of this his favored and exemplary servant, were obscure and circuitous; and that, so far from the Apostle being allowed to ascertain long beforehand how to shape his course, he had to grope his way step by step, doubtful whether he was to turn to the north or to the south, and obliged to make the attempt, in order to the determining whether it were what God approved. Shall we then wonder, or shall we repine, if God demand from us the exercise of faith, if He show us not, at once, and by any unquestionable manifestation, what his will concerning us may be, but require from us the patient waiting upon Him, and exercise us by the frequent frustration of our plans?

We hear much of the leadings of God's providence; and it is our busi-

ness, as Christians, to be always on the watch for these leadings; assured that, as God taught his people of old, by the cloud upon the tabernacle, when they were to rest, and when to set forward, He will not fail now to vouchsafe guidance to those, who, in all their ways, acknowledge Him, and lean not to their own understandings. But we are not to expect that the leadings of providence will be always, or even often, very marked and distinct. This would be to change the character of the dispensation beneath which we live; for if the pillar of fire and of cloud went visibly before us, it would be by sight, and no longer by faith, that Christians were required to walk. Let us not hastily conclude that God's providence marks out for us this or that course; and let us be specially circumspect, when the path, which appears thus prescribed, happens to be one which agrees with our own wishes. It is the easiest thing in the world to imagine the leadings of providence, where we have already got the leadings of inclination. And we may learn from the instance of St. Paul, that, even where there is prayerfulness, and the meek wish of entire submission, it may be only by dark intimations, and after many frustrations, that God's providence will mark out our course. Oh, who shall marvel that he has not direct and immediate answers to prayer, that faith is kept in exercise by the scantiness, so to speak, of the guidance vouchsafed, that he is often able only to conjecture God's will, and must take a step in doubt as to the rightness of the course—who, we say, shall marvel at this, if he duly remember that even St. Paul, when engaged in the high work of evangelizing the earth, was suffered to plan the going into Asia, but prevented by God, and then to essay the going into Bithynia, but once more prevented; and that, at last, he was only guided into Macedonia, by seeing a dim figure at his bedside, in the stillness of night, which pronounced the dubious words, "Come over, and help us?"

But we would now lead you along a wholly different train of thought: we will simply suppose that information is given to St. Paul in and through a vision of the night, when sleep had fallen upon him; and we will see whether this fact is not fraught with instruction.

The case of St. Paul is not indeed peculiar; for you must all remember how common it was, in earlier days, for God to communicate with his servants as they lay asleep; what frequent use was made of dreams and visions, when intimations were to be given of the Divine will and purposes. We cannot but think that there is something to be learnt from this which is generally overlooked; and we will therefore engage your attention for a while with a few remarks, and inferences, which may not perhaps have occurred to yourselves.

There is not one of you who does not consider that sleep is a sort of image of death. There is so evident a resemblance between the sleeping and the dead—sleep, like death, withdrawing us from the visible world, suspending our faculties, closing our senses, and incapacitating us for taking part in what is passing around—that the dullest imagination might invent the simile for itself, and would never have to wait till it found it among the metaphors of poetry. The heathen, dark as were their notions of another state of being, spake of death as a sleep; and Scripture, from the very first, made use of the figure—kings and patriarchs, when they died, were said to have "slept with their fathers;" in the New Testament, the same imagery is retained: "the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," was the expression of our Lord in regard of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue; and St. Paul, when he would comfort Christians sorrowing for the dead, reminds them, that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." But we need not be at any pains to prove to you either the fitness or the frequency of the metaphor by which death is likened unto sleep. You will all readily assent to the fitness, and your own memories will furnish proofs of the frequency. Our business is now with the pointing out, that the metaphor has not been carried to its proper extent, and that therefore men have drawn from it but a small portion of the truth which it is intended to convey. I do indeed think that God designed sleep as the standing image of death, so that men might continually be reminded, by the lying down in their beds, of the approach of a time when they must lie down in their graves. But I think also that God

hereby meant to fix their thoughts, not only on their dying, but on their rising from the dead. Why, when every morning calls us from our beds, strung with new energy, and, as it were, freshened into a new life—why are we to speak of sleep, as though it imaged our death, but not also our resurrection? The metaphor is evidently as accurate in the one respect as in the other. And I can hardly doubt, that, as there are many processes in nature which suggest to the thoughtful inquirer the great change which is to pass over us, and our reappearance on a higher stage of being, so was the rising of the sun, which seems, every morning, to repeople the solitudes, to call all nature from the sepulchre of night, and crowd once more the earth with animated being, intended to impress on the most cursory observer that the sleep of death is not to be perpetual, but shall terminate with the dawning of a day, when “all that are in the graves” shall hear a heavenly voice, and start forth from their resting-places. I cannot think, that the doctrine of a resurrection was not taught, whilst, though there might have been no immediate revelation on so sublime a point, men lay down at night to take their rest, and awoke in the morning reinvigorated and renewed. Whilst sleep imaged death with such accuracy, that scarcely any one, as he gazed on a slumbering fellow-creature, could fail to be reminded of a colder and a longer repose, every one, had he but fairly followed out the showings of the metaphor, might at least have conjectured, if he could not have proved, that the dead shall yet stir in their narrow beds, and be roused again to consciousness and activity.

But, whatever the degree in which the truth of a resurrection might have been inferred from the phenomena of sleeping and waking, there can be no debate that the figure, or metaphor, holds good in every particular, so that sleep is an accurate image of death, not only whilst it lasts, but also when it terminates. And when we find the image so commonly adopted in Scripture, we may safely conclude that God designed to fix our attention on the phenomena of sleep, that we might learn from them something of the mysteries of death. The falling asleep re-

presents to us the act of dying; the waking again represents to us our rising from the dead. But let us further see whether our condition, whilst asleep, may not furnish notices of our condition whilst we lie amongst the dead. This would only seem consistent with the character of the metaphor: if the falling asleep figure to us our dying, and the waking our rising, it is but natural to suppose that the intermediate state, the state between the falling asleep and the waking, must bear some resemblance to that wherein we shall remain between our dying and our rising from the dead. Let us see whether there be not warrant for making this further use of the metaphor, and what truths may be thereby illustrated or confirmed.

In sleep, as we all know, “it is not the whole man, it is only the earthly part, that falleth asleep.”* The bodily senses and faculties are suspended from their usual exercise; but the mind is more than commonly active. What flights will the soul take during sleep: how will it travel to the very ends of the earth, the very limits of creation: what conversations will it hold with known or unknown beings—nay, occasionally, as though the soul gained vigor through being temporarily emancipated from the shackles of the body, men find themselves, in their dreams, reasoning with greater clearness, understanding more thoroughly, and composing more freely, than they have been used to in their waking hours. It may be well doubted whether the soul is ever inactive: we do not always remember our dreams; but, probably, we always dream: we remember our dreams, when our sleep has been disturbed, and we have passed what we call a restless night; but it may not be our restlessness which has made us dream—we might have equally dreamt, had our sleep been profound—our restlessness may only have caused that our dreams are remembered, whilst a deeper, a less broken, sleep would have prevented their leaving any legible impression. And what ought we to gather from this activity of the soul during sleep? Surely, that the soul shall be active, whilst the body lies dead. This is only keeping up the metaphor. The

* Jones of Nayland.

representation has been most accurate hitherto—the falling asleep corresponding to dying, the waking up to rising again, and the suspension of the bodily organs and senses from their accustomed exercises being much the same, except as to duration, in the slumbering and the dead. Why then should we not give completeness to the imagery, by supposing that the condition of the soul during the continuance of sleep, corresponds to that during the continuance of death? I really seem hardly to need the profound arguments of the metaphysician, or the theologian, in order to the being convinced that the soul is not in a state of torpor whilst the body is in the grave: I have evidence enough in my very dreams. You know that it has often been a debated point, whether the soul will not be insensible, when separated from the body; whether the interval, from death to the resurrection, will not be one of utter unconsciousness, our immortal part, like our mortal, undergoing the complete suspension of every faculty and power. There is good testimony from the nature of the case, and still better from Scripture, that the soul shall not be thus unconscious, but, immediately on leaving the body, shall enter on a state of happiness or misery. Yet, take from me all this testimony, and I say again, that my very dreams might persuade me of the fact. That my soul is not inactive, and unconscious, whilst my body is asleep, seems to witness to me, so as to place beyond doubt, that my soul shall not be inactive and unconscious whilst my body lies dead. The state of sleep is the standing image of the state of death: and, taking the metaphor as every way accurate, I infer, from the soul's not sleeping with the body, the soul's not dying with the body. I know that dreams are wild and wandering things—but they betoken the soul's activity; and, yet more, they prove the soul susceptible of pleasure and pain, whilst the body lies insensible. What anguish we sometimes undergo in our dreams: what terrible scenes we pass through: what thorough wretchedness is experienced: what relief it is to wake, and find it but a dream! On the other hand, what bright visions sometimes visit us: what gladness takes possession of us! we have reached the summit of

happiness, and enjoy what we have long sought; and it is actually grief to us when the dream passes, and we are once more amongst the cold realities of earth. And thus our very dreams might teach us, that we shall be experiencing either misery or happiness, whilst the soul is separated from the body; that the separation shall not take from us the power, whether of enjoying good or enduring evil; and that allotments of the one or of the other shall be apportioned to us between death and the resurrection.

Neither is this all that may be said in regard of the illustration of our state in death, which may be derived from that in sleep. There is to be added what may be learnt from such passages of Scripture as our text, which teach us, that, whilst the body is asleep, the soul may be receiving instruction. It is every way observable, as we have already remarked, that God should have made such frequent use of visions or dreams, in the communicating intimations of his will. He might have given these intimations through many other modes; ought we not then to conclude that there was some special design in the selecting a method, which, to say the least, seems wanting in the clearness and convincings which might have been obtained by a different course? We consider that nothing can be more vague or uncertain, than a dream: yet God gave instruction by and through dreams—and that too more especially before life and immortality had been brought to light by the Gospel; for it was in the earlier ages of the world, when but little Revelation had as yet been vouchsafed, that dreams were more commonly made the vehicle of instruction. And it may have been, that, in the thus frequently employing dreams, and employing them more frequently whilst there was less distinct information as to man's state after death, God's purpose was to direct attention to the capacity of the soul for receiving instruction, yet not, through the organs of the body, but whilst those organs might be closed, and unable to discharge their ordinary offices. At all events, this is practically the result of the frequent use of dreams, that we are taught, beyond the power of controversy, that the soul, when loosened from the body,

may be gaining great accessions of knowledge, and growing in acquaintance with the will of the Almighty, and the secrets of the universe.

So that we now make up what was wanting in the illustration of death, as derived from the phenomena of sleep; and may assert the picture perfect. The lying down at night should represent to us the lying down in the grave, and the rising in the morning our resurrection from the dead. But sleep seizes only on the body: it leaves the soul free, free to use its own powers, yea, more independent in their use than often whilst the body is awake. And this should inform us that our state between death and the resurrection is not to be a state of inactivity and unconsciousness; but that throughout that mysterious interval, the interval from the body's falling asleep to its starting up again at the voice of the Son of man, the soul shall be in full possession, and in full exercise, of her own peculiar faculties; not reduced into insensibility or torpor, but rather the more quickened, and made the more susceptible, through having cast off the weight and incumbrance of the flesh. But, nevertheless, you may doubt whether the soul will then experience either happiness or misery; whether, till the general judgment have assigned the portion for eternity, there will be any feeling either of pleasure or of pain. Here, however, sleep gives its testimony: dreams, producing at one time keen anguish, at another rich delight, should teach us, that, whilst the body lies slumbering in the grave, the soul shall not only be susceptible of pleasure and pain, but shall experience either one or the other, a foretaste of that everlasting portion which will be assigned to it at the general resurrection.

And now there remains but one other question, a question of high interest indeed, and not so readily to be answered from a mere observing the facts and phenomena of sleep. Will the soul, in her separation from the body whilst the body is in the grave, acquire more and more knowledge? Will she be able, whilst she is deprived of those bodily organs through which she here gathers in knowledge, to receive communications from God, intimations of his will, manifestations of his glory? You might

dispute the accuracy of the picture were I here again to appeal to dreams vouchsafed to ourselves. For though there may still occasionally be instances of remarkable dreams, intelligence appearing to be sent through dreams as a vehicle, there is so general an indisposition to the recognizing a Divine interference with human affairs, that few would admit these instances as helping to establish any theory. But Scripture comes in just where our evidence might be defective or doubtful: God's recorded dealings with the sleeping enable us to complete the sketch of the condition of the dead. God made his choicest revelations to his servants of old whilst they were asleep. Whilst they slept He whispered to them promises, gave them commandments, unveiled to them secrets. Then I have no fears that the soul, when detached from the body by death, may be unable to make progress in acquaintance with high and heavenly things. She may be receiving rich instruction, and drawing in fresh stores of glorious truth, before as well as after the resurrection of the body. The separate state shall not be a state of dull inactivity or low attainment: that state is imaged by sleep: and as if to tell me what the righteous may expect in the separate state, God hath come to his servants in visions of the night, and taught them in sleep what they had vainly striven to discover when awake. And now I am not to be made to believe, because of any metaphysical difficulties, that the soul, detached from the body, will be incapable of apprehending or appreciating the glories of the invisible world; for I can think of Jacob sleeping at Bethel, and yet beholding the ladder that reached from earth to heaven, and hearing the voice of the Lord God Almighty who stood at its summit. Neither can I give room to any fears that, whilst the flesh lies slumbering in the grave, the soul will not be admitted into acquaintance with portions of God's will which it may vainly have endeavored to ascertain whilst on earth: enough that St. Paul, whilst awake, had meditated to preach in Asia, and assayed to go into Bithynia, seeking fruitlessly to determine what God's will might be; and yet that St. Paul, in sleep, which is the image of death, was thoroughly instructed in regard of that will—there stood

by him in a vision, "a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

We have yet to notice St. Paul's interpretation of the vision; and here we have a point of as much interest and instruction as either of those which have already been examined. "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them." We may suppose that the Apostle had some way of distinctly satisfying himself that the vision was from God: he was not left in any doubt as to whether the Macedonian phantom were the mere creation of his own fancy, or whether it were indeed a messenger from the invisible world. But there is no reason to think that any further revelation was added: the expression, "assuredly gathering," implies that the disciples were left to draw the inference from the vision; that they were not told what to do, except so far as directions were contained in what the phantom said, "Come over and help us." And the thing which they "assuredly gathered" was, that "the Lord had called them for to preach the Gospel unto them" of Macedonia. They never seem to have imagined that there might be any other way in which they could help the Macedonians, that the Macedonians could want any other sort of help: the invitation, "Come over and help us," could bear, according to them, but one interpretation, "Come over and preach the Gospel to us."

Do you not, then, see that St. Paul and his companions lived for only one object? do you not further see that they acknowledged but one remedy for all the diseases, one supply for all the wants, of the world? They lived for only one object: invited into a new country, they could have but one purpose in going thither, that of making Christ known to its inhabitants. They acknowledged but one remedy for human diseases, one supply for human wants: called upon for help, they never inquired what help was needed, but "assuredly gathered" that the Gospel was to be preached. Ah, how very different would it be amongst ourselves! Let the phantom be sent to one of our statesmen; let the form of the wild

Indian, or of the African, stand by his bedside in the stillness of the midnight, and breathe, in accents compelling his attention, the simple entreaty, "Come over and help us," and how would the politician interpret the call? He would probably conclude that ruthless foes were invading the distant country; and his first, his only thought, might be to send an army to its succor. Or let the spectre go and speak to one of our merchants—he would presently think of commercial embarrassments or commercial openings: he would imagine that the trade of the half-civilized country required to be put on a sound footing, and directed into right channels; and if he "assuredly gathered" any thing, it would perhaps be that he must at once freight a vessel, and send out a mercantile establishment. Or if it were even to one of our benevolent and philanthropic men that the phantom addressed itself, the likelihood is, that, on hearing of help being wanted by a distant nation or community, he would set himself to the making inquiries into the special necessities of that people—were they visited with famine? were they laid waste by pestilence? and he would hesitate as to what help could be given, till he had made out some particular and temporal evil under which they were laboring.

And yet, whatever our calling or occupation, we are professed servants of Christ, and all bound, by the vows of our profession, to take as our chief object the advancing Christ's kingdom. It was not merely because St. Paul's business was that of a preacher that he interpreted a cry for help into a cry for the Gospel: St. Paul was also a tent-maker; St. Luke, who was with him, appears to have been a physician: but it never occurred to either the one or the other, that assistance might be wanted to teach a trade or heal a disease: their ruling desire was that of glorifying Christ; all else was subordinate to this; they could not, therefore, be invited into a country and not seize on the invitation as an opening for Christianity. They might find other help besides spiritual help needed when they reached Macedonia; but they could have but one great purpose in going to Macedonia—that of planting the cross in a new region of idolatry. Or,

if you take the other view of their inference and determination, if you suppose, that with the politician, the merchant, or the philanthropist, they would make inquiry into the special circumstances of the Macedonians—what an estimate did they form of the worth and power of Christianity, in reaching but one conclusion, that they were called to preach the Gospel. They formed a right estimate, though one, alas! which we are practically loath to hold in common with them. They computed that, let the particular evils be what they might which wrung from the Macedonians the cry for assistance—war, or famine, or anarchy, or pestilence—they should take to them the most suitable and the most effectual of remedies, in simply taking to them the Gospel of Christ. They thought, and they believed, that in carrying Christianity to a land, they were carrying that which would best rectify disorders, alleviate distresses, assuage sorrows, and multiply happiness. And, therefore, they never stopped to consider whether they had at their disposal the particular engine which, on a human computation, might be suited for counteracting a particular evil—enough that they had the Gospel to preach; and they felt that they had an engine which could in no case be inappropriate, and in none inefficient.

Would that the like estimate of Christianity were practically held amongst ourselves; that, entreated by the Macedonian for help, we felt at once, that if we sent him Christianity, we should send him what he wanted, though it might not be what he asked. The Gospel is really this universal engine, the remedy for all diseases, the supply of all wants—but we distrust it, and are for assisting if not superseding it with inventions of our own. Introduced into the households and hearts of a people, it will quickly do immeasurably more than politicians could ever dictate, or philosophers devise, for raising that people in the scale of civilization, disseminating amongst them arts and sciences, destroying feuds, jealousies, and contentions, and diffusing the elements of real greatness and real happiness. Let us learn, from the example of St. Paul, to set a higher value on the Gospel: whether it be as a nation or as individuals that we are called upon by

the Macedonian for help; whether the cry, borne from heathen lands, be a cry specifically for religious instruction, or the cry generally of suffering and degraded humanity—oh, that with St. Paul we might know and feel, that having deposited with us “the truth as it is in Jesus,” we have a blessing to transmit which cannot fail to meet the exigence; oh, that we might show our sense of the universal suitableness and efficiency of Christianity, by “assuredly gathering” that the Lord hath called us to the preaching the Gospel!

And let another lesson be also drawn from the conduct of St. Paul and his companions. Observe how ready they were to obey God’s will the moment they had ascertained it. “Immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia.” The expression implies that there were difficulties in the way; but there was an instant effort at overcoming them. It had not been into Macedonia that they had been wishing or purposing to go: and unbelief might have suggested, Shall we let a phantom guide us? ought we not at least to wait for some less dubious intimation? But no; there was sufficient reason to think that God’s will was now discovered; and there was nothing to be done but to hasten to the sea, and seek the means of embarking. Alas, we are all ready enough to follow the leadings of God’s providence when they concur with our own wish; but how reluctant are we, yea, often how rebellious, when God points in one direction, and inclination in another! This is the trial—to set out for Macedonia, to which duty calls us, in place of staying at Troas, to which our own wishes bind us. But a Christian should have no will of his own: he is the servant of a Master in heaven, and the only thing for him to ascertain is, where that Master would have him work, and what He would have him do. Has the phantom been at his bedside? has the man of Macedonia glided before him, delivering a summons in which he has clearly heard the voice of his Master? Then he ought not to confer with flesh and blood. He is indeed to take every just means for assuring himself that he is not deceived; that the phantom has not been woven from the imagining of his own brain, but has really been sent to him by his Master. But this having

been duly done, there is no room for hesitation, no place for deliberation: obstacles are not to be considered, difficulties not made of account: go forward, forward in faith; for the phantom shall rise up at the judgment, and accuse the Christian of indolence, or cowardice, or want of self-denial, if, after having heard the call, "Come over, and help us," it could not be said of him, "Immediately he endeavored to go into Macedonia."

And are we not summoned to Macedonia? Has not the phantom crossed the seas, and stood upon our shores? and is not the voice for assistance shrill, and clear, and piercing? My brethren, the voice is yet more thrilling, and more plaintive, than that which fell, in night visions, on the ear of St. Paul. It is the voice, not only of the Macedonian, the foreigner, the heathen; it is the voice of our own countrymen. It is from our own country, from our own colonies, that the cry is heard, "Come over and help us." Pleading this day for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, whose special field of labor is our own vast empire, at home and abroad, it is to the voice, as issuing from our towns and our colonies, that my office bids me ask your earnest attention.

For nearly one hundred and fifty years has this society been engaged in its noble but arduous work. And it has extraordinary claims on the liberality of Christians—I shall not hesitate to say, greater claims than any other; its especial field of labor being, as we have just said, our own vast empire; and for whom are we so much bound to provide Christian instruction, as for those millions of our fellow-subjects who, at home, or in foreign lands, whether natives of the soil or emigrants from amongst ourselves, are destitute of that instruction which maketh wise unto salvation? The heathen are not excluded from the operations of this society: in India its labors are strictly missionary: it spreads the knowledge of salvation amongst idolaters and Mahomedans: it was the first society to assist missions in the East—though, alas! what are its most earnest efforts amongst one hundred millions of accountable beings, subjects to the same earthly sovereign with ourselves, but

ignorant of that heavenly King whose sceptre we profess to acknowledge?

It is however chiefly amongst our own countrymen that the society, whose cause I now advocate, exhausts its resources. Think of the countrymen at home. Think of the necessity for schools, for Bibles, for religious books. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge strives to meet this necessity. If it do not actually rear the school-houses, it supplies the implements of a sound Christian education, and is thus mainly instrumental to the diffusion of really valuable knowledge in our scattered villages and crowded cities. But turn from your countrymen at home to your countrymen abroad. Know ye any thing of the spiritual destitution of these countrymen? Let me briefly sketch it to you—you should know something of the spiritual destitution of our colonies, if you would know what a field is open to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and kindred institutions. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge aids foreign missions by grants of money and of books, and by translations both of the Bible and Prayer Book—I cannot therefore plead for this society without mentioning foreign operations. Look then at British North America in its three divisions of the Canadas and Nova-Scotia. Here you have a population of nearly a million and a half, scattered over an enormous tract of country; but the whole number of clergy employed in these provinces does not much exceed two hundred. Is there no cry thence, "Come over and help us?" Look at Newfoundland, with a population of eighty or ninety thousand, dispersed amongst the bays and creeks of an intricate and inhospitable coast—there may be from thirty to forty clergy to minister to these many thousands. Look at Australia, the enormous continent whence future nations are to spring, where we see already the foundations of an empire, which, if it began in the felon and the slave, may yet give laws to half the globe—you have here, perhaps, one hundred and forty thousand of your countrymen, for whom, by a mighty strain, our Church Societies support from forty to fifty clergymen. Is there no piercing cry, "Come over and help us?"

I blush to proceed with such an enumeration. I hear much of the wonderfulness, the gloriousness, of our colonial empire. They tell me that on its vast outspread the sun never sets, and that the Roman eagle in its most magnificent sweep, never gathered under its wing so ample a territory. But I see no elements of strength in an empire where there is no adequate provision for religious instruction. At the best, such an empire is compounded, like the feet of the great image, of the iron and the clay; the true principle of coherence is wanting; and extent can only ensure more tremendous dissolution. As a nation, we have done little or nothing for the maintenance of religion in our colonies—forgetting, to say the least, that colonies cannot, for a long time, from the very nature of the case, provide religious instruction for themselves. Hereafter, when they shall have settled themselves in opulence and strength, they will rear a native clergy, and give endowments to a church. But whilst the mother country pours in every year its thousands of emigrants, how can instruction be furnished for the ever-growing demand, unless we send shepherds as well as sheep to the waste and the wilderness?

We have been sorely negligent herein. We have got rid of our surplus population, the artisans and the peasants, who could not wring subsistence from our overstocked factories and fields. We have encouraged, we have assisted, them to emigrate, that we might have ampler room at home and

less desperate competition; and then, having cast them on a foreign shore, we have left them without schools, without churches, without pastors, without Bibles, and yet have expected them to remain loyal to their sovereign, though they might not be faithful to their God.

It is time that we roused ourselves, and wiped off the national disgrace. If reasons of state prevent the legislature from supplying what is needed, private benevolence must step forward and undertake the work. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge labors hand in hand with that for the Propagation of the Gospel to meet the ever-growing demand. But the resources of both are cramped—what then is to be done? Done? you will give the answer, for your part, to-day. The society is to be liberally supported: the cry, “Come over and help us,” is to be heard and answered: efforts are to be made, sacrifices are to be made; and you will make them this day. You will clear your own consciences; you will set an example to others; and from this city, we trust, shall a voice go forth to other districts of our land, the answer to the voice from Macedonia. Yes, dwellers on distant shores, dwellers in our own swarming towns, the phantom has been with us: he has roused us from our lethargy: we have heard the summons, “Come over and help us:” and henceforwards we will spare no pains, no cost, to communicate unto you the bread of life, for we assuredly gather that God hath “called us to preach the Gospel unto you.”

S E R M O N X I I I . *

EDUCATION.

"My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine."—PROVERBS XXIII. 15.

Our moral constitution is such, that whilst there is any thing like a healthful play of our powers and sensibilities, we derive pain and pleasure from the pain and pleasure of others, so that to grieve a fellow-creature is to grieve ourselves, and to make him happy is to increase our own happiness. There may, indeed, be such a derangement of the moral constitution, that the very reverse shall take place: hatred and revengefulness may acquire such power, that something like gratification is derived from the misery of an enemy, and envy will undoubtedly look with dislike and distress on the prosperity of a rival. But these instances tell nothing against the truth of our being made to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that do weep;" they only prove that we are so constituted, as to be intimately acted on by the condition of others, but so disordered by sin that the springs work the wrong way, making the pleasure come from the pain, and the pain from the pleasure; though the precise reverse would be the case were the mechanism repaired, and its several wheels set to rights. And when the Psalmist delivered his general maxim, that in keeping God's commandments there is great reward, he may be thought to have had regard to love as the fulfilment of the law; for certainly if love fulfil the law, there is a present reward in keeping the law: we cannot love our neighbor without feeling him in some sense a part of ourselves; and then our own happiness is multiplied

through the adding to it his. True indeed, if we thus make his happiness our own, we must also make his misery: but then sharing another's grief makes that grief lighter to the sufferer; and surely there is a satisfaction, yea, a pleasure in pain, if it help, in any way, to the soothing one whom we love.

Thus we may fairly give it, not only as one of the features in our moral constitution, but as one great motive to thankfulness to our Creator, that we are to be made happy through the happiness of others, as well as through the direct communication to ourselves of the material of happiness. And hence we can be justly and powerfully urged to the doing or the forbearing certain things, on the principle that others will be thereby affected, whether for evil or for good. The man of the greatest selfishness may not shut himself up in himself, declaring that he cares not for an effect upon others, and that if you would move him you must speak simply of effects upon himself. The effect upon others will, in a greater or less degree, if not through direct impact yet through reflection, be an effect upon himself; and it may often be but an appeal to his selfishness, to entreat him to act as though he were divested of selfishness. The moral constitution, if obstinately thwarted, is continually avenging itself: he who strives to live for himself, and thus does violence to a great law of his nature, eats of the fruit of his own ways, and has disquietudes forced upon him by the disquietudes of others.

* Preached at Liverpool, on behalf of the National Schools.

But to confine ourselves to a particular case, how powerful is or should be

the motive to the doing or the forbearing certain things, which is derived from the effect that will be thereby produced on those with whom we have the most intimate association. You may think it, if you will, but an exaggerated expectation, that men may be influenced in their actions by the consequences of those actions on the unknown and remote, consequences which may, in some way or measure, return upon themselves. But take the case of parties bound together by the closest ties of relationship, surely there is nothing fanciful or far-fetched in expecting that it will be a motive of great power with the one, that such or such an action will have great effect upon the other. Here, at all events, the reciprocity is so immediate and acknowledged—unless, indeed, the moral constitution have sustained far more than the ordinary derangement—that we may safely take it as amounting to nearly the same thing, if we show a parent or a child, for example, that he will benefit himself, or that he will benefit that other who is but part of himself. And it would seem to be upon this principle that Solomon proceeds in delivering the words of our text. There can be no debate that he wishes to furnish his son with a motive to the doing right. But whence does he fetch this motive? Not from the immediate effect upon the son, but from the immediate effect upon himself. “My heart shall rejoice, even mine.” He repeats it, you observe, that there might be no mistake: it is not, “thy heart shall rejoice,” but “my heart, even mine.” Yet we may not think that Solomon was here urging on his son the making a sacrifice of his own happiness in order to promote his. He was rather saying to him, Make me happy and that will make yourself. If he left out all mention of the child’s happiness, and spake only of his own, we may be sure that he proceeded on the acknowledged principle that such is the association between the parent and the child, that what was done to gladden the father would be most effectual in causing gladness to the son. And we have, therefore, in our text a very peculiar, but a very touching appeal to children—an appeal that they strive to do right for the sake of the pleasure which their so doing will cause to their parents. But

then the child might be disposed to meet this appeal with a sort of remonstrance, as though it were somewhat unreasonable to require him to act with a view to the happiness of another, rather than his own. We have taken pains, therefore, at the very outset, to remove this objection by fixing thought on the intimacy of the association between parent and child, showing you that it can only be where there is some monstrous disruption, some fearful want of natural affection, that the one can make the other happier, and not also make himself. Let this be borne in mind as we proceed with our discourse, and no child will say that he is not sufficiently left to consult his own interests, if we expect it to have great weight with him in deciding or regulating his conduct, that a father or a mother, as if requiring him to act without thought for himself, may address him, and urge him, in the language of Solomon, “My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.”

But now let us proceed to the more distinct examination of the passage, and to the endeavor at extracting from it its several lessons, whether to parents or children. Our foregoing remarks have gone to the showing, that if a child do that which will make a parent happier, he does that which will also make himself. It may, perhaps, seem necessary to qualify these remarks, by observing that undoubtedly the parent may be seeking happiness where it is not to be found; and that consequently the child, if it follow the parent’s wish, may only be heaping up material of disquietude for both. This, however, does not touch the general argument as to such an association between parent and child, that what generates happiness or unhappiness to the one, must, by reflection, generate happiness or unhappiness to the other. If, indeed, either mistake wherein true happiness lies, and lead the other to share his mistake, it will be unhappiness which is ultimately produced—produced not only in one, but in both; but this will but confirm the principle on which we insist, showing how the two act the one upon the other, though showing also the importance of seeking in a right direction for that which it is so disastrous to seek for in a wrong.

And here it is that we must entreat you to observe what it was that the child was to acquire, in order that Solomon's heart might rejoice. Solomon was a great king, reigning over a mighty and prosperous people: but he was not so distinguished by the extent of dominion, or the vastness of wealth, as by his wisdom, his profound acquaintance with every department of knowledge. And what, then, was likely to have been uppermost in the desires of Solomon on behalf of his son, judging him, that is, by what is common amongst ourselves, if not that he might be fitted to wield the same sceptre, to sit on the same throne, to sustain, or even amplify, the empire which had risen to such a pitch of renown? Or if the monarch had felt how far more precious and costly was the wisdom which drew round him an audience from the ends of the earth, than royalty with its most brilliant insignia, at least you would have expected him to desire for his son that universal science, that mastery over deep and secret things, that vast and comprehensive knowledge, with which his name ever has been, and will continue, identified. And Solomon did desire wisdom for his son: Solomon did make his own happiness result, not from his son's being powerful, not from his being opulent, but from his being wise. But what wisdom did he crave for him? from what wisdom was he to draw gladness for himself? "My son, if thine heart be wise." Observe, we pray you, it is not "if thine head be wise," but, "if thine heart be wise." And what is heart-wisdom? Nay, it is that which was never acquired in the schools, which may be wanting where there is the largest possible acquaintance with what passes for science, and possessed where there is the greatest possible ignorance of all of which philosophy boasts, or attempts, the scrutiny. Heart-wisdom is religion: he alone is wise in heart whose heart has been operated upon by the Spirit of God, so that he discerns the superiority of eternal things to temporal, and sets himself in earnest to the securing himself happiness in a world beyond the grave. It were idle to apply the definition to any other case; for no other kind of knowledge but the knowledge of God even pretends to make its seat

in the heart: every other avowedly addresses itself to the understanding, and is satisfied in having the intellect devoted to its acquisition: but "My son, give me thine heart," is the address of God to every one of his rational creatures: and though He may use the head as an avenue to the heart, yet is there nothing really done in religion till the heart have been carried; it is only in that inner shrine that there can be deposited "the wisdom which is from above." And you need only the slightest acquaintance with Scripture, and specially with the book of Proverbs, to be aware that they only are spoken of as actually wise who are "wise unto salvation;" no wisdom being thought worthy of the name which has not heaven for its origin and end, and the heart for its abode. There can, therefore, be no debate that what Solomon wished for, when wishing that his son might be wise in heart, was that this son might fear and love God; that, whatever else he might acquire, and whatever else he might want, he might be truly religious, a follower of those who professed and felt themselves strangers upon earth.

But, alas! how different for the most part is the wish of parents, at least if that wish be gathered from their actions, rather than their words! Would it content most of us, would it gladden most of us, that our children gave promise of piety, if, at the same time, they gave little or no promise of ability? Is it an indication of their being "wise in heart" which makes us thrill with pleasure? is it not rather an indication of their "being wise in head?" We wish for them the dangerous, if not the fatal, dowry of intellectual endowment; we long that they should be able to carry off the prizes at school and at college; and, perhaps, if the truth must be told, it would not be without a pang of disappointment and regret that we heard of their being fond of the Bible, but unable to make way in Latin and Greek. Not that there is any need for depreciating, for undervaluing, intellectual ability and literary acquirement. They are choice things; and if a child show talent, and if he outrun his competitors, there is no reason why a parent should not be gratified and thankful; the talent is God's gift, a gift which God designed to be employed and improved, and cer-

tainly we are neither to lament nor conceal it, as though it were not fitted for admirable purposes; we are rather to cultivate and develope it as that which may be largely beneficial, and vastly promote the Divine glory. But at least it can hardly be with unmixed pleasure that a right-minded parent marks the indications of ability in his child. What a perilous gift is talent! How likely to be wrongly directed! how sure, if it be, to work misery to its possessor, and to numbers besides! And even if well and successfully used, to what dangers does it expose! the eminence to which it may raise a man, is but a point from which he may fall, fall with greater force, and with less hope of recovery.

Is then the want of talent in a child to be so deeply deplored? is the presence of it to be so admired? is that necessarily the flower, the hope of the family, who is all keenness and power, with mental grasp, and mental retentiveness, which give promise of the first-rate classic, or the distinguished mathematician? Alas! alas! how often is the first-rate classic the elegant trifler, and the distinguished mathematician the captious sceptic. And better the idiot with his shut-up mind, his stifled understanding, than the clever youth who is too witty for seriousness, or too argumentative for belief. No, no, let talent have its due place; let us assign to learning its due worth; but let us not speak of ourselves as Christian parents, if our first wish for our children be not that they may be religious, if their being wise in heart make not up, in our estimate, for every other deficiency. And yet, perhaps, whilst there is not one of you, who will not, in theory, assent to the justice of this decision, numbers of you know very well that it secretly condemns them. You are all alive to the indications of ability in your children; you are comparatively indifferent to the indications of piety. Well, then, compare yourselves with Solomon, Solomon who was, at least, better fitted than any of us to judge, from experience, as to what, in reality, is most to be desired for a child. It may help to give a right direction to your wishes and endeavors, in the important matter of education—teaching you, not indeed to neglect the culture of talent, nor to

despise the acquisition of knowledge, but to make every thing subordinate to your children being trained to remember their Creator in the days of their youth—to ponder the saying of Solomon, of Solomon the opulent, the mighty, the learned; he speaks to his child with all earnestness, and with all affectionateness; he urges his child by the love which a child should bear to his parent; but he does not say, My son, if thou become rich, if thou gain worldly distinction, if thou acquire great store of knowledge, then you will make me happy; he simply (O Christian parents strive to do the same) but pathetically, exclaims, “My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.”

Now this is using the text so as to make it furnish an admonition to parents; it was addressed however to a child, and we ought therefore to regard it as designed especially for the admonition of children. We endeavored, at the outset of our discourse, to make you thoroughly aware of there being such links of association between parents and their children, that either consult for their own happiness in consulting for that of the other. It is important to keep this in mind; for if we now follow out the course indicated by the text, we must proceed to urge children, by their love for their parents, and by their wish to gladden their hearts, to aim and labor at the acquiring true piety. But let not children think that this is urging them to make themselves miserable, that their parents may be happy,—parents made happy by the misery of their children! as well might caused by the rising of the sun. Oh no, my dear young friends, your being religious will make your parents happy; but why? because they know that else you cannot be truly happy yourselves. You will indeed contribute to their happiness, if they themselves know what happiness really is; but you will not contribute to it by taking from your own: you may fancy this till you make the experiment; but make it, try whether wisdom's ways be not ways of pleasantness, and you will find that fathers and mothers were but urging you to be happy in urging you to be righteous, that they were but entreating you to spare yourselves wretchedness.

when telling you how it would gladden them to know you wise in heart.

And we speak now especially to those who have the advantage of religious parents, parents who endeavor to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—an advantage not always felt at the time, nay, which is often regarded as an inconvenience and restraint; for the child of religious parents will sometimes look with a kind of envy on the child of more worldly, wishing for as much indulgence, or as little denial, in pleasures and pursuits which solicit the senses. But the advantage is commonly recognized sooner or later; few, who have been religiously brought up, die without blessing God for early instruction, or without bitterly bewailing their having despised parental admonitions. Mind that, my young friends; I am talking to you now, rather than preaching; perhaps you think it rather hard that you have not the same liberty which you see some others have, that you are kept from places to which others go, that you are not permitted to mix as much in gay and dissipated scenes. I dare say you sometimes wish that your parents were not quite so strict; but you will live to feel that your parents were right; I only hope that you will feel it before it is too late; how sad to find that you were taught the right way, when it shall no longer be in your power to turn out of the wrong.

But now, I want to speak to you as Solomon spake to his son: I would urge and persuade you to try, and mind all which you read in the Bible, assuring you that this will greatly delight your parents, and make their hearts glad. I would not speak to you, if I thought you did not care about pleasing your parents; the child who does not mind whether he pleases, or vexes, his father and mother, must be a very wicked child: I am afraid there can be very little use in talking to such an one; his heart must be too hard to be touched by my words: there will be need of many of the rough blows of sorrow and trouble to soften a child who is not grieved when he grieves his kind parents. But I am speaking now to children who love their parents, and who wish to make them happy, What can you do to make them happy? I will

tell you; try as much as ever you can to do your duty towards God. You know what your duty towards God is: you are taught it in your Catechism; there you learn that one part of this duty is to call upon God; that means, praying to God; but praying to God is something more than saying your prayers; you must remember what you are about: some children, whilst they say their prayers, think about their toys; this makes God angry, and if their parents knew it, this would make them sad. Then again, it is a part of your duty to God to honor his holy name and word. This means that you are to have a great respect and love for the Bible. The Bible, you know, is God's word: God told good men what to put in the Bible; and when, therefore, you read the Bible, you should remember that it is not a common book, that you are reading a lesson from God Himself; what a wicked thing to be careless and inattentive, when it is God Himself who is instructing you. And you are further taught by the Catechism, that your duty towards God is to "serve Him truly all the days of your life." It is very difficult to serve God; but the earlier you begin, the easier it will be. And the great thing is to try and remember that God always sees you, that you can never hide anything from God, not even the thoughts of your hearts. This will make you afraid of doing what you know to be wrong. Not that I want only to make you afraid of God; God made you his children when you were baptized, and He wishes you to love Him, even as He loves you. But if you begin with being afraid of displeasing Him, you will soon come to the being desirous of pleasing Him; you will read in the Bible how He sent his dear Son Jesus Christ to die for sinners, and how that blessed Saviour said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me;" and all this may bring you to the loving as well as the fearing God.

And if you will but indeed strive, in such simple ways as these, to perform your duty towards God, you will rejoice the hearts of your parents; the very thing which, as affectionate children, I am sure you are most desirous to do. You can all understand, you can all feel, this motive to the trying to serve God

If I were to preach to you about the greatness and awfulness of God, perhaps you would say, we hardly know what the clergyman means. If I were to tell you about being sick, and dying, and being buried, perhaps you would say that it was a dismal sermon, and that I only tried to frighten you, and make you sad, when there was no great occasion. But when I talk to you of trying to make your parents happy, of pleasing your parents, and giving them joy, you can all understand that, you all wish to do that. Well then, dear children, for the sake of your parents, try to do your duty towards God. If they are good parents, this will make them happier than any thing else which you can do; and nothing will make them so sad as the seeing that you despise or dislike what is religious. They cannot be always at your side to tell you this. Perhaps they may soon die, and leave you orphans, and you will never hear their kind voices again as long as you live. But you may be sure that, whenever they have an opportunity of expressing their hopes and their wishes, of informing you how you may best repay all the anxiety, and toil, and care, which you have cost them; ah, perhaps, even after their death,—for who can tell that dead parents do not remember, do not think upon, their children? they must remember, they must think upon them, if there be any remembrance, any thought, of earthly associations; and as angels are made glad by the repentance of sinners, may not the spirits of departed fathers and mothers rejoice in the growing piety of sons and of daughters?—but, at least, dear children, be assured that, so long as it shall be possible to give pleasure to your parents, you will give the most by earnest endeavors to keep God's commandments: your father says to you, your mother says to you, "My child, my child, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine."

We had purposed the working out in greater detail the principle involved in these words of Solomon; so that we might have set under other points of view the motive to the serving God, derived from the satisfaction thereby caused to parents and kinsmen. We are quite aware that the motive may be accused of coming short of what motives should be, when it is such a high

duty as that of serving God, to which we would incite whether the young or the old. But religion seeks to press into its employment all the affections and sensibilities of our nature. It makes its approaches through variety of avenues; and we do very wrong, if, through any notion of lowering religion, of taking off from its dignity and royalty, we keep continually placing its claims on the most elevated grounds, and reject those points of attack which are certainly to be found in less lofty regions. It may have a better sound that we should launch forth at once on the obligation to serve and love God, considering Him as having created and redeemed us; that we should introduce nothing subordinate or intermediate, but present Him, distinctly and directly, as the being on whom all affections must centre, and to whom all powers must be consecrated. But depend on it, so far as children especially are concerned, there is a vagueness and indefiniteness in this sublime presentation of Deity, which will operate greatly against the setting to work at the duties of religion. The child is lost: you put him to climb, and give him no ladder to climb by; he cannot follow you into the pure seraphic region where you would have him find a home for the desires of his heart; and whilst the young affections are going out, in their freshness and their warmth, towards his parents, it will perhaps only come upon him as a chilling and deadening sound, to be told of a great invisible Being, whose word is to be his law, and the pleasing whom his end. Why not then strive to take advantage of the workings of natural affection, so that, as God has undoubtedly placed the parents between Himself and the child, as channels through which blessings shall be conveyed, the child may be led through the earthly father to the heavenly, his very love for those who gave him life being used for the raising him up into obedience to the universal Lord? This is virtually the method prescribed in the text; and it is characterized, as we believe, by profound practical wisdom. Solomon simply says to his child, "You love me; then, for my sake, try and serve God." He does not say, "Serve God for his own sake," though it must have been to this that he wished and

purposed ultimately to bring the child ; but he took advantage of the affection which was then in full play ; and without attempting to give it any wrench by directing that it be turned upon another, leaving it in all its gratefulness and ardency, he merely told the child how he might best prove his love, and give most pleasure to its object. Oh, this was giving a hallowed character to domestic charities ; this was consecrating to a noble purpose the sweet emotions which circulate between the parent and the child : and now the mother, as she sees fondness for herself beaming from the eyes of one who has hung upon her breast, has no need to feel, alas ! he is but giving me the love which he ought to give to God : she may rather be glad that so powerful a sentiment is at work, affording an immediate opening for the claims of religion ; and throwing into her words all a mother's pathos, and all a mother's power, she may say to the affectionate child, eager to show his affection, " My child, my child, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine."

But we have not space to enlarge further on the principle in question. It must suffice that we have thrown out some hints which may assist you in making use of the natural affections towards the training up of your children " in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." You may work on them by their love for yourselves, when what you wish to produce in them is the love of God. But we must now turn to the claims of the National Schools of this vast town, which this day make their annual appeal to your bounty. The whole tenor of our discourse, as having had reference to the religious education of children, will have prepared you to regard with favor the petition of an institution, whose grand object, and chief labor, it is, to impart such an education to numbers who might otherwise be deprived of that advantage. You will not indeed expect that I can have any thing new to tell you with regard to your Schools ; their best praise is, that they go on quietly and systematically in the old beaten path, not indeed rejecting such improvements and additions as may have been suggested or demanded by the circumstances of the times, but holding fast by the truth that edu-

cation in the principles of the Established Church is education in the fear of God, in loyalty, in virtue, in integrity, in all that befits a man, and befits a Christian,—ay, that, in spite of the outcries and sneers of Sectarianism, to teach the Church Catechism is to teach pure Christianity, to train in Church discipline is to train for immortality.

We are forced to say as much as this in regard of the National system, so nobly defended and developed in Liverpool, yea, defended even by the more enlightened Dissenters ; for from the one end of the land to the other, have been heard invectives against education according to the doctrines of the Church, as though it would be to contaminate the people, to diffuse amongst them sentiments subversive of their best interests here and hereafter, were there any such measures for general instruction as should even remotely involve the ascendancy of the Church as the authorized teacher. Be it so : we know which system has produced most of practical religion ; we know where there is to be found most of that obedience to law, that patient industry, that quiet endurance of tribulation, that beautiful discharge of social duties, and that implicit reliance on the promises of Scripture, which, if they do not fit the poor to be the tools of demagogues, and the puppets of faction, at least make them the safeguards of a state, the glory of a Christian community. But there is wisdom, there is policy, in determined resistance to the entrusting the Church with the education of the poor. Her enemies justly judge that there is no such effectual way of attacking the Church, as the withdrawing from her superintendence the masses of the rising generation. They would make her, if they could, the rich man's Church, knowing that fall she must, as fall she ought, though fall she shall not, if she cease to be the poor man's Church. Fall, we said, the Church shall not, not, at least, through ceasing to be the poor man's Church. For if the legislature, hampered by the conflicting interests of parties, can do little towards strengthening the Church in the great work of parochial education, the members of that Church will only feel themselves the more called on to come forward with liberal assistance.

Our text contains the principle of Church education, and Churchmen will rally round institutions where such principle is recognized. "My son, if thine heart be wise," not, "if thine head." It has been a thousand times said, it will never be disproved, that education without religion is not a blessing, but a curse. The enlightened philanthropist is not to be gladdened by the diffusion of merely intellectual education. He does not want a more knowing people, except as it shall be also a more godly. He deprecates the giving power separate from the principle which insures its right use. His speech, therefore, is, "If thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Do then your part with the same liberality with which you have hitherto done it. Support as Churchmen, I will venture to say as Englishmen, the schools which now ask your succor, and which, from their very constitution, pledge themselves to the maintenance of Church principles. Show by your subscriptions that the Church is eager to discharge her office in regard of the instruction of the poor, that her conscience prompts to patient efforts and

plenteous sacrifices, and will not let her children rest, except as they do their utmost towards implanting the fear of God in the rising generation. Thus will you be accumulating the material of a righteous gladness. You may yet live to see signs of moral verdure on the waste places of our land. Your heart shall rejoice, even yours.

This vast emporium of commerce, which has this day been seen in its glory,—for that glory is not so much its throng of traders, or the forests of masts from its magnificent docks, as the lengthened procession of the thousands whom it is training up in the fear of the Lord,—this vast emporium then of commerce, already an example to England by its vigorous support of Bible education, may increasingly exhibit, in its glorious prosperity, how true it is that those who honor Him, the Almighty will honor. Foremost in the endeavor to make wise the heart of English youth, you may bequeath to children, and to children's children, that blessing of the Lord which "maketh rich," and to which, O blessed portion, He "addeth no sorrow."

S E R M O N X I V . *

THE TESTIMONY OF ENEMIES.

"Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."—DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 31.

You are all aware that something like suspicion attaches to evidence which proceeds from the friends of a cause, and that the circumstance of a party having a direct interest in what he af-

* Preached on Trinity Sunday, at St. Bride's, Fleet-street, on behalf of the London Fever Hospital.

firms often causes his affirmation to be received with some degrees of allowance. We cannot deny that our inclinations exert great influence over the judgment, so that even where there is no wish to exaggerate or misrepresent, undue weight will be given to the side which we are anxious to uphold. And

it must equally be admitted, that when once we have engaged in the defence of a cause, many motives will combine to the keeping us firm; and the likelihood is far from inconsiderable, that aversion to the owning ourselves wrong will have as much sway as the consciousness that we are right.

It is partially thus in respect of the evidences of Christianity. The evangelists and apostles, on whose testimony we mainly rest the truth of our religion, were unquestionably men who had so embarked themselves in the cause of Christianity, that they might be considered as pledged to maintain it at whatever hazard. Their learning was so much to its side, that they might be suspected of a bias which incapacitated them from the exercise of a sound judgment, and rendered their decisions at the least unsatisfactory. And certainly if it had been vastly for the interest of evangelists and apostles that they should adhere stedfastly to Christianity, there might have been fair ground for thus impugning their testimony. But, after all, unless men have something to lose by confessing themselves in the wrong, we are hardly warranted in expecting any singular obstinacy. Indeed, we have already admitted that reluctance to acknowledge error will do much towards producing constancy; so that a man might probably forego some advantage, and endure some inconvenience, rather than retract opinions once advanced. But if we carry our suppositions further, so as to bring them up to the case of the first publishers of our faith; if we attach to the maintenance of opinions the loss of all that is held dear by men—reputation, and friends, and property, and life—then, indeed, there seems no ground for the impeachment of testimony; it is nothing to urge that the evidence is that of interested parties, when all that can be called their interests would have been consulted by abandoning their opinions, had they known them to be false.

It is in this manner that we rescue the Gospel histories from a suspicion which may be cast on them as the work of writers who were biassed to the side they support. We admit generally that the evidence of the warm friends of a cause must be received with some caution: their partiality may have exerted

an influence on their judgment, and facts may have been exaggerated by the medium through which they are viewed. We admit also, that the having once avouched an opinion may produce determination to maintain it, even when men have become doubtful of its truth, and must in a degree be injured by upholding it. But we cannot allow that these admissions at all involve a suspicion as to the veracity of evangelists. Evangelists had every thing to give up, and nothing to gain, if they persisted in publishing Christianity; and we know not what but honesty of purpose, and a full conviction that they pleaded for truth, could have led them to brave shame, and poverty, and martyrdom, rather than retract what they had once boldly advanced.

But whilst we would thus contend that nothing can be fairly urged against the testimony of evangelists, on the ground that it is the testimony of interested parties, we recur to our original position, and allow generally that the evidence of the friends of a cause is not of the same worth as that of its enemies. We receive the evidence of the friends with caution, because it is quite possible that their prejudices in its favor may have led to their magnifying facts and making light of objections. But when the evidence of enemies is in favor of a cause, we feel that we may receive it without the least hesitation—the enmity is our warrant that it would have been kept back, had it not been irresistible, and that, in place of being exaggerated, the almost certainty is that it has been reduced to the least possible strength. On these accounts we reckon the testimony of Judas Iscariot to the truth of Christianity more than commonly valuable, because, however suspicious you may be of the evidence of Peter and John, men who had attached themselves devotedly to Christ, you cannot look with the same doubtfulness on that of an apostate who sold his Lord for a paltry bribe. We need hardly observe, that much of direct testimony in support of a cause is hardly to be looked for from its enemies. There is inconsistency between the suppositions of men being the opponents of a system and explicit witnesses to its truth. When, however, there is no direct evidence, there may be indirect; and an

adversary may unconsciously and unwittingly furnish support more valuable than we gain from an advocate. Now our thoughts are on this Sunday especially turned by our Church on that great mystery of our faith, the doctrine of the Trinity. We may say of this doctrine, as generally of Christianity, that if we could find it in any way attested by enemies, there would be a worth in the attestation which belongs not to that of its most earnest friends. We must also say that direct attestation is not to be expected, or, to speak more truly, is impossible; for no man who disbelieves or denies the doctrine of the Trinity can, whilst numbered amongst its opponents, bear open testimony to its truth. But it is quite supposable that there may be indirect ways in which adversaries give a witness; and if such can be found, then all which has been said on the worth of their evidence should lead us to its diligent investigation. We cannot, however, apply ourselves to this search, until we have more opened the subject of discourse presented by our text.

The words which we have read to you occur in that song which Moses wrote in a book, and "spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel," just before he ascended the mountain on which he was to die. The great lawgiver, forbidden to enter the promised land, takes a leave the most affectionate of those whom he had led through the wilderness, and bequeaths as his best legacy, exhortations to steadfastness in obeying Jehovah. There were gathered within the range of his vision the future fortunes of Israel; and he alternately rejoiced and lamented as with prophetic gaze he marked the advancement and depression of God's chosen people. He well knew that the Almighty had so separated Israel for Himself, and had so appointed the seed of Abraham to greatness and sovereignty, that nothing but their own waywardness and rebellion could interfere with their prosperity and happiness. And therefore when he observed how the imagery of disaster crowded the yet distant scenes, he brake into the exclamation, "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" He saw that in place of carrying them-

seives successfully in the battle, the Israelites would yield to an inconsiderable force, and multitudes be discomfited by a handful of opponents. Why was this, unless because wickedness had provoked God to withdraw his protection and his strength? Was it that the false deities of the heathen were mightier than the Jehovah of Israel, and therefore ensured that victory should be on the side of their worshippers? Indeed the very adversaries themselves would not advance such assertion. They knew and they confessed that their sources of strength were inferior to those to which the Israelites might apply; and would not, therefore, themselves refer their success to the greater prowess of the power they adored. "Their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." And well, then, might the lawgiver, whilst on the point of being gathered to his fathers, expostulate indignantly with Israel on the madness of that idolatry into which he foresaw they would run. Their very enemies acknowledged that there was no rock like Jehovah, and yet the rock of these enemies would be preferred by them to their own.

Now it is a very remarkable assertion which is thus made by Moses, affirming that we may obtain that testimony from a foe, which, from the nature of the case, we should have expected only from a friend. We can hardly reconcile the facts, that the enemies of the Israelites acknowledged the superior strength of their rock, and yet continued to adhere to another and a weaker. But even these facts are not necessarily inconsistent. One idolatrous nation might believe that another served a mightier deity, and yet not attempt to substitute that deity for its own. The deity might be regarded as national, and no more to be changed than the climate or the soil. "Hath a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods?" is the expostulation of Jehovah with Israel, when reproaching them, by the mouth of Jeremiah, with their inconstancy and apostasy. And therefore it is not indispensable that we suppose the testimony of idolaters, to which Moses refers, to have been exclusively indirect. Indeed there are not wanting instances in Scripture of what may be reckoned direct testimony. The Ca-

naanites, for example, had heard what God had done in Egypt; and Rahab's declaration to the two spies, who had come to spy out Jericho, was, "As soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you; for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Here, the Canaanites themselves being judges, their rock was not as the rock of Israel; for they had no confidence that their gods would shield them against the power of Jehovah. In like manner, when, in the days of Eli, the ark of the covenant of the Lord was brought into the camp of Israel, the Philistines were sore afraid, and exclaimed, "Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods?" They probably regarded the ark in the light of an idol; and they frankly owned that they dared not expect that their deities would prove as strong as those of the enemy. We may add that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, awed by demonstrations of the might of Jehovah, published decrees which recognized his supremacy, and which clearly showed that, themselves being judges, their rock was not as that of their captives, the Jews. These are perhaps instances of what may be called direct testimony on the part of idolaters to the superiority of Jehovah over all which they worshipped as God. But probably it is not to direct testimony that Moses refers. He may only have intended to assert that Jehovah had given such demonstrations of supremacy as should have carried conviction to the servants of false gods. And when you remember what had been done in the leading Israel from Egypt—the plagues which had overthrown their enemies, the dividing of the waters, the miracles in the wilderness—you must admit that all who heard what the Lord had effected on behalf of his people, were so furnished with proofs of his pre-eminence, that, themselves being judges, He ought to have been acknowledged as the alone true God.

But it is unnecessary that we search further into the bearings of our text as originally delivered. There is nothing, so far as we can see, to confine the passage to the time when it was uttered—the lawgiver is gathering all ages

into his last words; and we may suppose therefore that this testimony of enemies is to be found at one period as well as at another. We come down then at once to our own day and generation, and, confronting all those by whom Christianity is opposed, would know whether it be not demonstrable that "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges?" We shall not appeal to the writings of adversaries, because direct testimony is almost excluded by the very nature of the case. It is not indeed difficult to produce from the works of men who never embraced Christianity, evidences of its truth, and acknowledgments of its power on the lives of its professors, which go to prove this religion superior, in its claims and its influence, to every other system which has prevailed upon earth. It is well known that heathen historians strikingly corroborate the records of evangelists, and that they speak, in the largest and most unqualified terms, of the virtues of the early followers of Christ. And it were easy to arrange these admissions into something of a demonstration that, in the judgment of the adversary, however unconscious he might be of passing such judgment, there was a truth and a strength in Christianity which placed it far above all idolatrous systems. But this line of argument would not conduct to much that is practically important; neither would it have any bearing on the doctrine which is this day commended to our special attention. We therefore limit our inquiry to testimony which is altogether indirect, given without design, but not with the less force. We regard as emphatically the enemies of Christianity, those who absolutely reject Revelation, and those who, professedly receiving it, explain away its chief mysteries. The first is the Deist, who will have nothing but what he is pleased to call natural religion, and who denies that God hath made any disclosures to his creatures but what are graven on the visible universe, or on the tablet of conscience. The second is the philosophizing Christian, whether he style himself the Arian, or the Socinian, or the Unitarian, who in some way or another impugns the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore removes from the Bible the great truth of an

atonement for sin. These, we say, are the chief enemies of Christianity; and it is from these we are to seek a testimony to the excellence of that creed which we ourselves profess to have adopted. And, therefore, through the remainder of our discourse, there will be two great truths at whose illustration we must labor—the first, that the rock of the Deist is not as our rock, the Deist himself being judge; the second, that the rock of the Unitarian is not as our rock, the Unitarian himself being judge.

Now we shall begin with an argument which is applicable to every species of infidelity, whether it take the form of a total or of only a partial rejection of Scripture. We are well aware that various causes may be popularly assigned for a man's adoption whether of Deism or Socinianism, and that he may be declared quite candid and honest in his disbelief of Christianity or its fundamental doctrines. There are not wanting advocates of a sentiment which we hold to be itself nothing better than infidel, the sentiment that a man is not answerable for his creed. But we are sure, in opposition to all this spurious liberality, that God hath made truth so accessible to every fair and right-minded inquirer, that there is no possibility of its eluding his search. We are sure that the evidences for the truth of Christianity are so numerous and decisive, and the statements of doctrine so clear and explicit, that there can be no such thing as unavoidable Deism, no such thing as unavoidable Socinianism. We must express to you our conviction, that the source of infidelity is exclusively in the heart; and that, however sincere a man may seem in his pursuit after truth, it is through nothing but a wish to be deceived that he is at last landed in error. We know not how any one who ascribes to God the attributes which belong essentially to his nature, can uphold an opposite opinion; for unless it be conceded that God has so revealed his will as to make it our own fault if we continue in ignorance, there is manifestly no place for human accountability and the processes of judgment. And therefore are we persuaded—and it is not a seeming want of charity which can induce us to keep back the persuasion—that pride and dislike to

the high morality of the Gospel are in the main the producing causes of infidelity. Who thinks that there would be any thing approaching to rejection of Christianity, if it were a system which at all flattered our pride, or showed indulgence to our passions? We should have no Deism, if the contents of Revelation were not designed to humble us, and produce self-denial; we should have no Socinianism, if the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity demanded not the unqualified submission of our reason. But it ought to be evident that no religious system would be adapted to our nature and condition, which did not set itself vigorously against our pride and our passions. It ought to be evident that without some great moral renovation, a thorough change in the dispositions and tendencies with which we are born, we cannot be fitted for intercourse with such a Being as God must necessarily be, nor for the enjoyment of such happiness as can alone be looked for as his gift to his creatures. It ought, therefore, to commend itself to us as an incontrovertible truth, that Christianity is worthy our credence and our veneration, in exact proportion as it tends to the production of humility and of holiness. And if in any way, whether direct or indirect, there be put forth a confession that Christianity is more adapted than some other system to the subduing the haughtiness and corruptions of our nature, we may affirm of such confession that it amounts to a direct testimony to the superiority of our religion.

But we maintain that this very confession is furnished by the rejection of Christianity. We find the causes of rejection in the humiliating and sanctifying tendencies of the religion. We trace Deism and Socinianism, and under these every form of infidelity, to a cherished dislike to truth which demands the subjugation of self, and the prostration of reason. What, then, does the rejection prove, but that the embraced system is more complacent to pride and more indulgent to passion? And if it prove this, it is itself nothing less than a testimony on the side of Christianity. It is an acknowledgment that Christianity is better fitted than the spurious faith by which it is superseded for the beating down those lofty imagi-

nations, and eradicating those unrighteous propensities, which must be subdued and uprooted ere there can be hope of admission into the purity and the blessedness of heaven. It is, therefore, a declaration,—ay, and a more open and direct could not be more emphatic—that if regard be had to the moral wants of humanity, to the circumstances under which we are placed, and to the renewal of which we are palpably in need, then the religious system opened up to us by the Gospel is of incomparably greater worth than any which men propose to substitute in its stead. Oh, it is no argument to me, but altogether the reverse, against the truth, whether of Christianity in general, or of its peculiar doctrines, that many in every age have rejected Revelation or explained away its mysteries. I would know something of the causes which have generated Deism and Unitarianism: and the more I search, the more is the conviction forced on me that the Bible is repudiated because at war with all that man naturally loves, and its distinguishing doctrines denied because requiring that reason submit to God's Word. And if I am not wrong in this conviction—and I can be wrong only if God may be charged with the ignorance and the sin of his creatures—why what is the Deist and what the Unitarian but a witness to me of the worth of Christianity? Rejected or mutilated because diametrically opposed to pride or to passion, the rejection or the mutilation undeniably proves that what is substituted for genuine Christianity is less adapted to our moral necessities. And therefore it is not to the martyr alone, dying rather than cast away his faith, that I appeal for evidence to the superiority of our rock. It is not to those who have made trial of this rock, and who building thereupon have reared structures which the tempest could not shake, and which, as they rose, have been more fitted for the indwellings of Deity. We can challenge the very adversaries to bear testimony. We can wring a witness to the superiority of Christianity as an engine adapted to the exigences of a disorganized creation, from the secret yet discernible reasons which cause a land to be deformed by many shapes of infidelity. Oh, knowing that these reasons have to do with the

humiliating and sanctifying tendencies of the religion of Jesus, and that consequently what is substituted for this religion must less tend to humble, and less tend to sanctify, and, therefore, be less fitted for such beings as ourselves, we can triumphantly look our opponents in the face, and unflinchingly declare that "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

But in this argument we have associated the several kinds of infidelity, and derived the evidence of which we are in search from Unitarianism as well as from Deism. But we would now confine ourselves to the case of the Deist; and we think it a fair way of forcing from him evidence as to the worth of Revelation, to require that he compare the state of a Christian nation with that of a heathen. If he be right in contending that there has been no Revelation, and that men need no Revelation, but that reason is sufficient as a guide and instructor, he cannot object to our trying his theory by the test of experience, and appeal to undeniable facts. We draw, then, a contrast between what was effected towards the amelioration of human condition whilst heathenism had the world to itself, and what has been done since Christianity gained partial sway. We will take the most favorable exhibition which ancient records furnish, where an empire extended itself over half the globe, where arts flourished in their fullest efflorescence, where poetry was in all its harmony, and philosophy in all its vigor. And would any man desire to be transported back nineteen centuries, that he might be the citizen of a country which had thus reached the summit of renown, whose monuments are still our studies, and from whose ruins we yet gather the models of our sculpture and our architecture? We are sure that, whatever differences of opinion there may be as to the cause, there must be universal agreement as to the fact, that in all which gives real dignity to a state, in the defining and defending genuine liberty, in all which tends to promote and uphold public prosperity, and to secure peace and happiness to the families of a land, there is no comparison between the advances made whilst reason was man's only instructor, and those which may be traced since reason

had the aids of a professed Revelation. We are not afraid to refer it to the decision of the most inveterate opponent of Christianity, whether civilization has not advanced with a most rapid march wheresoever the Gospel has gained footing; and whether the institutions of a country professedly Christian could be exchanged for those of the most renowned in heathen times, without the loss of what we hold dearest in our charter, and the surrender of what sheds their best beauty round our homes? We have never heard of so thorough and consistent an advocate of the sufficiencies of reason, that he would contend for the superior civilization, the finer jurisprudence, the greater civil liberty, the purer domestic happiness, attained to whilst reason was not interfered with by communications which avouch themselves from God. We are bold to affirm that he who is most strenuous in opposing Christianity, and most vehement in decrying it, thinks it fortunate for himself that he has been born in Christian times and a Christian land. And this is enough to enable us to extort from him a testimony to the superiority of our rock. He may refuse to give us a testimony; but, whether he will or no, it is furnished by his own admissions. We only ask whether he prefers what reason achieved by herself to what has been achieved since the coming of Christ; and knowing what his answer must be, we know also that he is a witness to the worth of Christianity. We know what his answer must be. We know that he would be ashamed to wish the restoration of the worship of a thousand impure and fabled deities. We know that he would not dare to uphold the advantages of being ignorant whether or not the soul were immortal. We know that he could not decide that there was as much protection for property, as staunch a guardianship of the helpless, as equable a distribution of justice, as active a benevolence towards the suffering and the destitute, as general a diffusion of respectability and happiness, whilst the world was left to its own strength and wisdom, as now that a religion has been introduced which professes to rest on immediate Revelation.

And this is enough to warrant our claiming him as a witness to the superi-

ority of our rock. He may imagine other reasons by which to explain the advancement which he cannot deny. He may pretend to assign causes which account for the improvement, and which are wholly independent on Christianity. But we contend that in the possession of Christianity alone lies the difference between ourselves and the nations whom we have vastly outstripped. We do not excel them in the fire of genius, and the vigor of intellect; for even now they are our teachers in the melody of verse, and in the strictness of reasoning, and in the mightiness of oratory; and we sit at their feet when we would learn to be mentally great. We dare not affirm that reason, by herself, could ever achieve more than she achieved in Greece or in Rome—for we are still but the pupils of the dead sages of these ancient states; we light our torch at their inextinguishable lamps, and, if ever we rival their literature, we presume not to think that we ever surpass. And therefore does the assertion seem every way correct, that we should never have stood higher than they in all those respects in which, confessedly, they are immeasurably distanced, had we not been blessed with the revelation of the Gospel. The world had gone as far as it was possible for it to go with no guide but reason, and then Christ appeared to show how inconsiderable the progress had been. We challenge then the rejecter of Revelation. We summon him as a witness on the side of that which he openly denies. We have his confession—he cannot keep back his confession—that, wheresoever Christianity has prevailed, there has been a rapid advance in all that gives fixedness to government, sacredness to every domestic relationship, and therefore happiness to households. And this is virtually a confession, however he may seek out some subterfuge, that natural religion is vastly inferior to revealed as an engine for heightening the morals, and improving the condition of mankind; that the guidance of reason alone is in no degree comparable to that of Revelation, when the ends proposed are those which are eagerly sought by every foe of evil, and every friend of man—and oh, then, is it not a confession which warrants us in affirming, when opposing such as reject the Gospel of

Christ, that "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges?"

But we are aware that in this last argument we have not taken the highest ground which we are entitled to occupy. We have striven to show you that an acknowledgment may be wrung from the Deist to the worth of Christianity, considered in regard of its power to promote the well-being of society. But this is not the most important point of view under which we have to consider Christianity. The excellence of a religion should be tried by its power of preparing man for death. It is in directing us how to provide for the future that a religious system is valuable; and though it may confer collateral benefits, and improve the temporal condition of a people, we can form no estimate of its worth as a religion, until we have examined it as a guide to immortality. And if Deism and Christianity are to be compared on a death-bed, we shall readily gain the testimony which is asserted in our text. We cannot fully apprehend what it is to put away Revelation, and cast one's self on the resources of reason, until we have brought principles to the last hour of life, and determined what power they have of sustaining man in the throes of dissolution. It is then, when all which may have cheered us on in a career of pride and misdoing is being rapidly withdrawn, and the soul feels that she must go forth in her solitariness, and abide the searchings of judgment, that the worth of a religious creed must be tried—and worse than vain is that dependence which fails us in this extremity, worse than useless a system which gives way when we most need support. And without denying that Christians, for the most part, live far below their privileges, so that the hour of death is not regarded with that composure and confidence which should follow on the knowledge that the last enemy will be swallowed up in victory, we may safely declare that nothing can be compared to the religion of Jesus, when triumph over the grave is the respect in which comparison is instituted. Our appeal is to known matters of fact; it is not by argument that we can make good this point. It will not then be denied that persons of every age, and of every

rank in life, are continually meeting death with calmness, and even with joy—the principles of Christianity being those by which they are sustained, and its hopes those by which they are animated. And as little can it be controverted that the disciples of Deism shrink from dissolution, and that never are their death-beds such as a spectator would desire for his own. We admit that Deists have died with apparent unconcern; but as it was with our two great historians, Gibbon and Hume, their very eagerness to occupy themselves with something trifling and frivolous, has proved incontestably a restlessness at heart, and betrayed an anxiety to drown serious thought. In attempting to play the hero, they have played the buffoon. And, in other cases, in what agony, and with what remorse, have the disciples of infidelity crossed the border-line of eternity. There are few histories more thrilling, or fuller of horror, than those of the last hours of Paine or Voltaire. And where there has been neither affected indifference, nor excruciating dread, we are not afraid to declare that there has been nothing which approached tranquillity or gladness. Men may have gone hence without betraying any particular emotions. "The wicked," saith the Psalmist, "have no bands in their death;" and those who have gone the fearful lengths of denying Christ, and rejecting Revelation, may sink into an apathy, and exhibit such blunted sensibilities, as shall pass with those around for peace and composure.

But where have been the beamings, the flashings, of hope and exultation? Where the boundings of the spirit, elastic with immortality, as angel forms have seemed to beckon it, and the street of gold, and the tree of life, to break on its vision? Where the palpable mastery over death, the holy defiance of all the powers of dissolution, the vivid anticipations of happiness, the affectionate exhortations to survivors, that they tread the same path, the whispered assurance that there shall be reunion in a bright world, where the "wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest?" Oh, we shall wait in vain to have these produced from the death-bed of the Deist. We are willing that the records of Deism should be

searched; but we are confident that not an instance can be found in which the dying unbeliever could exclaim with rapture or with serenity, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And, therefore, is the Deist a witness to the worth of Christianity. Therefore do we appeal to him in evidence that the religion of reason is not to be compared with the religion of revelation. He may boast the massiveness and solidity of his rock; and he may depreciate the strength, and attempt to undermine the foundations, of ours. But we will make proof of the two rocks, and examine how they stand, whilst the earthly house of this tabernacle is being taken down by death. We observe that he who has builded on the rock of Christianity meets the destroyer with confidence, and is manifestly a conqueror at the very moment of being conquered. But he who has builded on the rock, if such it may be called, of Deism, has nothing with which to oppose death but an unbecoming levity, or a stupid indifference; and if not aghast with terror, is void of all hope. And this is not supposition. This is no inference of our own, which the Deist may controvert by argument. Our appeal is exclusively to registered facts. Our challenge is to the Deist himself, to the Deist in his last struggle, when he has little temptation, and less power, to deliver a false testimony. And, oh, if after we have depicted to our adversaries the beautiful brightness which adorns the evening of a righteous life, and told them of the holy boldness with which the naturally timid advance into eternity, and shown how the chamber in which the Christian breathes out his soul is a privileged place, a place where we have visible proof that death is abolished, a place where, if tears be shed, they are quickly dried up, as by a supernatural radiance, a place whence bequeathments of hope and of comfort are sent to every part of a bereaved family, or a sorrowing neighborhood; oh! we say, if, after this, our adversaries have nothing on their side to display but a chilling apathy, or an assumed indifference, or the desperate anguish of a storm-tossed spirit, have we not right to class these very adversaries themselves amongst the advocates of our cause? have we not warrant for

declaring, when Deists practically confess, by the way they meet death, that the rock on which they build is breaking into shivers, that "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges?"

Now we consider that much, if not all, of this latter reasoning is as applicable in the case of the Unitarian, as in that of the Deist. We believe that where there has been rejection of the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine of an atonement for sin, there is never any of that calmness and confidence in dying, which may continually be seen where the trust rests on the great propitiation. And the rock of the Unitarian is not as our rock, the Unitarian himself being judge, if the man who thinks to be his own peacemaker with God, can exhibit none of that assurance, when passing into eternity, which the very weakest possess who know that their sins have been laid upon a surety.

But we have other ways in which to make good this, the second, position, into which our text was resolved. We would observe that the mystery of our faith, against which the Unitarian specifically sets himself, and on which our Church now directs us to turn your attention, is beyond question an unfathomable depth—the union of three persons in one essence being utterly incomprehensible by our own, and indeed probably by any finite, intelligence. But with every admission of the greatness of the mystery, we feel it our duty to warn you against the distinguishing mystery of the Trinity from other mysteries in the Godhead, as though it were more stupendous, or less to be understood. We would always oppose ourselves to the making such distinction, as we would to the advocacy of fatal error. It is just here that the Unitarian stumbles; and having attempted to separate between mysteries all equally inexplicable, is presently involved in a vast labyrinth of falsehood. You can no more comprehend how God can be every where, than how God can be three in one. The doctrine of the Divine omnipresence baffles our reason to the full as much as the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity. I cannot conceive how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each by Himself God, each equally possessing

all the incommunicable properties of the Divine nature, should yet together constitute the one eternal indivisible Jehovah. But neither can I conceive how, at the same moment, a being can be present, in all his integrity and all his supremacy, in this our scene of assembling, and in the furthest corners of immensity. Is it more of a mystery, that three should be so combined into one that there is distinction and yet unity, than that one should be so universally diffused, and yet so entirely circumscribed, that He is now by my side in all his magnificent attributes, and yet equally on every star which is walking the firmament, and equally with every creature throughout the sweep of unlimited space? We may make the same assertion of other properties of Deity. Once introduce the rule that we are not to admit what overpasses reason, and we can have no Creator but a creature. The eternity of our Maker, that He is from everlasting and to everlasting; his omniscience, that "all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" his omnipotence, that "he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;" I have no faculties with which to comprehend any one of these properties: the more I meditate, the more am I confounded; and after every attempt to find out God, I can but pronounce Him one mighty mystery, to be adored in all respects, and scrutinized in none.

Now if the principle on which the Unitarian proceeds in rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, be thus a principle which equally requires that we deny to Godhead whatever distinguishes it from finite subsistence, we hold that, by the decision of the Unitarian himself, his rock is not as our rock. The Unitarian himself being judge, reason is to prescribe the limits of faith, and we are to receive nothing but what we can comprehend. Then, we contend, the Unitarian himself being judge, we are to worship a God who is not omniscient, and not everlasting, and not omnipresent. We guide ourselves by the judgment of the Unitarian. He gives as an instance of the application of his rule, the exclusion from our creeds of the doctrine that there are three persons in the Godhead. Then of course in the judgment

of the Unitarian, we are to exclude whatever is as incomprehensible as this doctrine. What then are we to do with the doctrine that God is equally every where? what with that of his having had no beginning? These are at the least as much above reason as the doctrine of the Trinity, though of none of them can you show that it is contrary to reason. So that, proceeding upon nothing but the verdict of the Unitarian, and following out implicitly his decision, we represent to ourselves a Deity in whom indeed is no mystery, but in whom therefore is no divinity. And if it be by simply obeying the rule laid down by the Unitarian, that we thus imagine a being on the throne of the universe, with none of those properties which belong essentially to Godhead, why, we must be warranted in declaring that the Unitarian, if consistent with his own principles, must adore as supreme one who wants the characteristics of supremacy, and who cannot therefore deliver; and that consequently, "his rock is not as our rock," the Unitarian himself "being judge."

But there is yet another mode in which the Unitarian attests the superiority of our rock. We would remind you of the importance of regarding the doctrine of the Trinity as a practical doctrine. Men are apt to consider it a matter of abstruse speculation, and fail to observe how the whole of the peculiar system of Christianity stands or falls with this mystery. And hence they are offended at what they count the harshness of the Athanasian Creed; just as though the points in debate were points on which men might innocently differ. But, of course, if you deny the doctrine of the Trinity, you deny also the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; so that the great matter at issue between ourselves and the Unitarian is, whether Jesus the Mediator were God, or only man. And on the decision of this question hangs the decision of another, and that the most practically interesting which can be agitated amongst men, whether the Gospel be merely a system of purer morality, and loftier sanctions, than had before obtained upon earth, or whether it be a system of supernatural helps, of a real atonement for sin, and of the vicarious obedience of a surety. Unless Christ be God, it is certain that

He can have made no expiation for the guilt of humankind, and that He can have merited nothing on our behalf. He may have taught many noble truths, He may have raised the standard of morals, He may have brought the rewards and punishments of another life to bear on the duties of the present, He may have set a marvellous example of purity, and benevolence, and patience, and confirmed his doctrines by his death; but He can have effected no change in our moral position before God: He cannot, by the sacrifice of Himself, have taken away the sin of the world; He cannot have "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." So that, when he has rejected the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, the Unitarian, if consistent with himself, must reject every doctrine which is peculiar to Christianity, and reduce the Gospel into little better than an authoritative republication of religion. The Unitarian must, of necessity, look to be saved by his repentance and obedience: having no confidence in the merits of another, his whole dependence must be on his own.

Now we are not about to show what we may suppose you all readily acknowledge, the vast inferiority of the Unitarian system to the orthodox, when the two are compared in their adaptation to the wants of such creatures as ourselves. This were an easy task; but it is not this which is set us by our text. It is not the superior strength of our rock which we have to demonstrate, but the fact that the enemy himself is a witness to that superior strength. And this we attempt by the following simple reasoning. The Unitarian looks to be saved by repentance and obedience, no respect being had to the merits of a Mediator. Now repentance and obedience are an important part of our system, as well as of that of the Unitarian. We hold, as well as he, that no man can be saved, unless he repent and do works meet for repentance. And it were absurd to say that the motive to good living is not, at the least, as strong to those who trust in Christ, as to those who trust in themselves. It is a truth, attested by the experience of the Church in all ages, that no principle is so influential on the conduct as that of faith in the Saviour. So that our system em-

braces all which that of the Unitarian embraces; whilst it adds doctrines which, if true, cannot be omitted without ruin, and which, if false, serve only to strengthen us in that holiness on which our acceptance is to rest. If, then, the Unitarian be right, he has no advantage over us—repentance and obedience being presented at least equally under both systems. But if the Unitarian be wrong, we have unspeakably the advantage over him; we have a Surety in whose perfect satisfaction to find refuge, when the worthlessness of all that man can effect for himself is being proved before the Judge of quick and of dead. If we err in acknowledging the Deity in Christ, and considering his death a sacrifice for sin, the error must be innocent; for with the mass of men it is unavoidable—the language of Scripture being apparently so strong and so explicit on these points, that the generality of persons, who are not great scholars and not fine critics, can attach to it no meaning, but that Jesus is God, and that He died as the substitute of sinners. It cannot, therefore, be for our injury that we honor Christ as Divine, and regard his death as propitiatory, inasmuch as the Bible is so written that opposite conclusions can be reached only by processes which lie out of reach of the great body of men. And what, then, has the Unitarian to say of our rock, except that it is stronger than his own? He would tell us that we need nothing but repentance and obedience, in order to the gaining favor with God: and we bring to our Maker the offering of repentance and obedience, though we are not bold enough to think that it can be of worth enough to procure us reward. He would tell us that we are to look to Christ Jesus only as a pattern: and we feel it bound on us as a most solemn duty to take the Saviour as our example, though we add to this the taking Him as our propitiation. He would tell us that there is mercy with our Creator for creatures who are compassed with infirmities: and we too rest all hope on the mercy of the Most High, though we feel it also necessary that his justice should be satisfied. He would tell us that there is a moral energy in our nature, by which men may subjugate their lusts and live righteously and godly: and we know it our business to work

out salvation, and strive for the mastery, though we reckon all the while on the assistances of a Person of the ever-blessed Trinity. And when, therefore, we try the strength of our rock on the principles of the Unitarian himself, we prove it incontestably stronger than his. The Unitarian shall be judge. The Unitarian shall state the grounds on which immortal beings like ourselves may safely rest our hope that the coming eternity shall not be one of anguish. Repentance, good works, the imitation of Christ, the known mercy of God—if he advance these, we go along with him in constructing a rock on which to rest. We, too, hold that the ceasing to do evil, the learning to do well, the following Jesus, the appeal to Divine compassions, are modes in which the wrath of the ever-living God is to be turned away from those who are born under condemnation. And if, therefore, the rock of the Unitarian is a firm rock, ours is as firm, for the same elements of strength, and in at least the same degree, enter into both.

But this is nothing. We are not content with a confession of equality; we seek one of superiority. And it cannot be kept back. We only add to the Unitarian's rock what, on his own principles, may amazingly strengthen it, and on no supposition can weaken. He rests on righteousness, and we add a righteousness in which there cannot be a flaw. He rests on mercy as inclining towards the weak, and we add a covenant by which mercy is unalterably pledged. He rests on repentance, as though it made amends for transgression, and we add an atonement which has removed human guiltiness. He rests on native energy as that through which every duty may be performed, and we add a superhuman might which can in no case be deficient. What then? We have but accumulated on his rock, and that too in an unmeasured degree, those very elements of solidity which, himself being judge, must be found in the basis on which men build for eternity. And if it should be proved at last that all thus accumulated is worthless, and must be swept away, there will yet remain a rock as firm as his: whereas, if it should be proved that all this is necessary, he will be without a resting-place amid the convulsions of the judg-

ment. On whose side, then, is the advantage? Our rock, examined by his own tests, cannot, on any supposition, prove weaker than his; whereas his, if he be wrong in his theory, will be found as the sand, whilst ours, like the adamant, is immovable, infrangible. Oh, then, if making trial of the respective grounds of confidence on the very principles of the Unitarian himself, estimating relative strength on the supposition that what the Unitarian calls strength actually is strength, it appears that we cannot be hereafter in a worse position than the Unitarian, but that the Unitarian may be in one immeasurably more insecure than ourselves; why, is it not the verdict of our very adversary himself, that there is not the certain fixedness in his foundation which there is in ours? and are we exaggerating the testimony which deniers of the Trinity, unconsciously it may be, but yet powerfully furnish, when we affirm that "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges?"

But there is yet one more illustration which ought to be given of our text. We have been engaged in showing how arguments in favor of Christianity may be wrested from our adversaries; it behooves us to take heed that arguments against it be not derivable from ourselves. We gain the best of the former from the tacit confession of more sanctifying doctrine; and we may furnish the latter by the open demonstration of unsanctified lives. If we would prove the rock of the enemy unlike our rock, even on the testimony of the enemy himself, let us see to it that we build on that rock so noble a superstructure, a superstructure of good works, that the very adversary shall be forced to confess the superiority of the doctrine from the superiority of the fruits. We can challenge the heathen of old times, and force him to confess our rock the best: for he never reared the hospital, the asylum, the infirmary, whilst Christianity has covered the earth with structures for the sick and afflicted. But we are not content with the witness of the heathen; we want that of every adversary of truth; and we now appeal to you for additional evidence, that there is nothing like orthodox doctrine for producing a liberal care of the suffering

And never were you solicited for your bounty in a case more urgent than the present. The Fever Hospital—the name explains the institution: but I might speak to you for an hour, and not compass half the reasons why you should give in large measure. In this densely populated metropolis, fever often rages to a fearful extent, and assumes a most malignant type. If our great hospitals do not feel it indispensable to close their doors against patients on whom fever has seized, yet the disease is of such a nature, that there ought confessedly, in the hope of arresting contagion, to be a separate establishment for the reception of the sufferers. And therefore was the London Fever Hospital erected, its wards being open to those only who are afflicted with some form of the disease which the definition includes. But what is this hospital able to effect? in what degree does it meet the demand for such an institution? Alas, alas! its officers have been unwearied, its attendants have caught the fever and died by the side of those to whom they ministered; but the public has been scanty in supplying adequate funds; and it is quite frightful to hear how, during the past year for example, the resources of the hospital proved insufficient for the wants of the sick. Sometimes there have been a dozen applicants for the first vacant bed—and these applicants with the parched tongue, and the rapid pulse, and the burning, beating brow. Often when the bed has become vacant, it has been found that several of the applicants had died during the interim. Perhaps they might have been saved by timely succor: but the uncooled fire scorched and scathed them; and they were hurried into another world, to give testimony how Christians were showing love to God. In some cases, the patient has expired before the bed could be prepared; and in five instances, when the vehicle in which the patient had been removed from his dwelling arrived at

the gate of the hospital, alas! he asked no bed but the grave, for life was already extinct. There, Englishmen, there, Christians, is this a state of things which you will permit to continue? Why, if it were merely a regard for public and personal safety which actuated us, we ought to interfere. We are leaving the metropolis open to a plague, we are exposing our own households to the most terrible disease, whilst we suffer our courts and alleys to be infested with fever, and take no adequate measures for arresting its progress.

But I waive this argument: I am asking for demonstration of the superiority of our rock: I must, therefore, have a disinterested and a Christian liberality. I may, however, paint to you its objects—oh, that I could. The poor creature, seized on by fever, is perhaps shunned by all around him: they dread the infection; they almost fear to approach him, lest there should be death in the touch. As the only resource, he is conveyed towards the Hospital; for if there be room, disease is the only passport asked for admission. If there be room—then the sufferer may be refused; the death-thirst seems already upon him, perhaps delirium has begun, and the wild wandering eye shows the mind to be unhinged. And is such an one to be refused? At this moment, perhaps, he might be, but not to-morrow; and why not to-morrow? Because this congregation is about to come nobly forward, and throw funds into the hands of the committee for completing that enlargement of the institution which want of money, and nothing else, retards. And why do I know that this congregation will make this great effort? Because they build upon orthodox doctrine as their rock; and because, as I am persuaded, they feel it incumbent on them to make good our text, in regard of all adversaries of this doctrine “Their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges.”

OCKER
DEC 17 1985

