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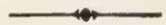
SERMONS

ON

DOCTRINE AND DUTY

BY

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TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, HARTFORD.

DEAR BRETHREN,

YOU will recognize these sermons as, in substance, what I originally preached in the pulpit of your parish church. Their publication is no project of my own; but when to the suggestions of a publisher, from whom such proposals are entitled to great respect, was added the remembrance of your own frequent request for such a memorial of my ministry among you, I was induced to comply. Accept the volume, then, as a token of the unaltered affection with which I shall ever remember you, and of the pleasure with which I often review the twelve years of my life, passed in the service of your souls.

Your faithful friend,

A. C. C.

BALTIMORE, 1855.

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SERMON I.

THE COMING OF THE JUDGE.

ADVENT SUNDAY.

BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS, AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM, AND THEY ALSO WHICH PIERCED HIM; AND ALL KINDREDS OF THE EARTH SHALL WAIL BECAUSE OF HIM. EVEN SO, AMEN. Revelations i. 7.

To the world, before the flood, the holy Enoch preached the second advent of Christ, while he warned the men of that generation of the impending judgment which was to be its token and pledge. After long ages of coincident prophesyings, the apostle, who supplies the text, seals up the volume of inspiration with the fervent response, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

Thus strikingly harmonious, as well as constant, has been the testimony which the Church of CHRIST perpetuates, concerning the end of all things as at hand. It shows us that, since the fall, God has been making a very short work of human history, abridging it into a few thou-

sands of years, and preparing the world for swift destruction. Time is, accordingly, only that insignificant portion of eternity with which man is concerned; and God has been pleased, from the beginning, to define the limit which he has set to time, as not very far removed from the starting-point of creation. Noah is represented as the eighth preacher of righteousness. Among the patriarchs that preceded him, there were, therefore, seven who proclaimed the promises; and we may well believe that, from the days of our first father, mankind have been duly premonished of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

This testimony has been progressively confirmed by the signs of successive times, by the changes of all things human, and by the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together, until now. Above all, the Judge himself has given us his personal assurance of his coming, and has commissioned a succession of men to publish his warnings, and to prepare the world for the event. To-day, therefore, according to the ancient ordinances of the Apostolic Church, we renew the proclamation, and call the world, from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same. To-day the trumpet is blown in Zion, and her walls resound

with the cry of the watchmen, *Behold he cometh.* To-day, too, the Church begins her ritual year, stealing a march upon time itself. For while the world's year grows old, and wanes apace, and vanishes away, she starts her children, be-times, upon a new cycle of the sun; rising, as it were, before the morning-watch, and bidding us to gird up our loins, and to trim our lamps, and to speak often one to another, saying, "What of the night?" Thus we learn to live in advance of the world, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God. Thus, too, if we give good heed to the appointed Scriptures, we shall find ourselves led to think much upon death and judgment, and heaven and hell, those "four last things" which concern men, and which are the great realities in view of which we ought to live. They are, indeed, matters of common interest; for death is not, more certainly, the end of all men, than it is true that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of CHRIST.

The text may be properly examined, in a reverse order, collecting its successive details, so as to illustrate more fully the summary exclamation with which it begins, *Behold, he cometh.* But first let us note the principle which invests the whole passage. It is that the judgment is

the work of the Great Mediator; the fact that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The Mediatorial system becomes complete in this settlement of accounts between the world and the world's Redeemer. The judgment is the necessary complement of the Incarnation. He who has interposed as a Daysman between us and our Creator, and who now perpetuates his work in heaven and earth, in our behalf, must bring this work to a conclusion, corresponding with his relations to man and God. He has bought us with his own blood; and as all power is committed unto him, in heaven and earth, so that no man cometh unto the Father but by him, so it is Christ alone who can properly decide who are his, and who have rejected his offers of mercy. It is CHRIST, therefore, with whom we have to do, and who is to judge the secrets of men's hearts according to the Gospel. Men are to stand or fall in judgment, not so much with reference to original holiness, as by the test of accepted or rejected mercy. By the original covenant of creation, man is weighed in the balance of justice: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." By the covenant of redemption we are measured by the standard of grace: "Whosoever believeth

in me shall never die." In thinking of judgment, therefore, and in endeavouring to prepare for it, we make a fatal mistake if we forget that it is "the judgment-seat of CHRIST" before which we must all appear, and that all the works by which we are to be judged, are to derive their character from the condition of faith in him. And though we are presented, in the Scriptures, with the very words which the Judge shall speak, in closing up the terrible assize, let us not overlook the fact, that those words are but the grand liturgic close of a searching trial, beforehand, in which every evangelized soul shall have been examined, according to the test, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God." This preliminary trial it is which will first divide the sheep from the goats; and when this division is complete, then, according to the rubric of that stupendous ceremony, our great High Priest shall say to those upon his right hand, "Ye did it unto me," and to those upon his left, "To me ye did it not." Their works are good or bad according as they were works of faith in Christ, and of love to him. See, then, the danger of any conception of judgment in which an atoning Saviour is not enthroned as the

grand centre of the scene. In forgetting this primary truth ; in endeavouring to balance sins which nothing but his blood can wash away, by acts of bare morality ; or in striving to secure a credit, in the books of God, for works which are not wrought in genuine charity, and which proceed not from true faith, many souls build their house upon the sand, and great shall be the fall of it. Such was the folly of the Pharisees, whom CHRIST astonished by his assertion that "the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." When they presumed to sneer at such a claim on the part of one whom they beheld before them, in fashion as a man, and in the form of a servant, he yet more confounded their pride by adding that this rock of offence is the very foundation on which his judgment-throne shall be reared. "The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, *because he is the Son of Man.* Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

This idea of the second advent, as the day of the Lord Jesus, not only runs through all

the apostolic Scriptures, but it seems to be here the especial and prominent thought of St. John, when he utters the response, *Even so, Amen.* This holy aspiration for the glorious appearing of his Lord, he repeats and confirms to the end of his Apocalypse: "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." And though, in the text, it closely follows, and seems to seal the words which describe the most frightful feature of the judgment, the wailing of nations, and the despair of the lost, even that is a detail which is apparently absorbed in the consideration of the desirableness of Christ's coming, in view of his blessed purpose to put an end to this bad world, and to right all its wrong. *All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*; but better so than that they should go on rejecting and denying him. Therefore, says the apostle, *Even so, Amen.* As Christ is the universal Redeemer, he must be the universal Judge; and they who would not rejoice in his mercy, must wail because of his justice. But the kindred of the redeemed are not reckoned here among these *kindreds of the earth*, for in that day of their manifestation they shall be no longer of the earth; but theirs shall be the kingdom of heaven. Nor will they be mere spectators of the judgment; for they shall ra-

tify it, and glorify it, as just, and wise, and holy. And though some of their own kindred, according to the flesh, should be condemned as "of the earth, earthy," we may be sure that this fact alone will forever separate such miserable creatures from the affections and the relationship of the children of the resurrection. In that day, if we are Christ's, we shall be made like unto him; we shall have spiritual bodies; we shall be as different, in all respects, from the lost, as the angels are from fiends. Consequently, we shall love none but those who are our kindred in Christ. What a motive for such as would perpetuate their friendships, through all eternity, to strive, in time, to rescue those whom they love from unbelief and sin! But, in that day, if they shall rise in all the deformity of Christ's enemies; if they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt; if they shall rise only to stand disclosed in their true characters, and stripped of all those disguises which they wore on earth, deceiving alike themselves and others; who among the sons of God shall claim them as friends, or desire them as companions? We have had friends, perhaps, whom we now count as friends no longer. They have alienated us forever, by some sudden and shocking exhibition of interior character, from which we

have turned with loathing, and we name their names no more. Even so, in their new bodies, and their glorified estate, the children of God shall know no man, any more, according to the flesh. When the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints, they too shall execute judgment, in rejecting forever all ties and affections that are not sanctified in him. There will be no misgivings, no questionings, whether the Judge of all the earth does right. The wicked themselves shall wail because of their conscious guilt. No lost soul but shall discover himself to be the author of his own undoing. No one shall accuse CHRIST of reaping where he had not sown, that shall not be judged out of his own mouth. Nor need we perplex ourselves as to the unevangelized heathen. What is that to thee? Enough, that He shall judge the world in righteousness, as he shall judge his people with his truth.

The universality of the judgment is further asserted in the language, *Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced him*. We believe that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust; and that the assembly of the last day shall not lack the presence of any human creature that ever breathed. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and

after that the judgment." As death keeps the one appointment, without fail, and with all, so shall judgment keep the other. Nay, the law of death has exceptions. "We shall not all sleep;" and Enoch and Elijah were translated "that they should not see death." But the law of judgment excepts none, not even angels; and if God spared not them, how shall man escape? Let the apostle explain the text by his own further revelation:—"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." All souls shall be there, and in their flesh they shall see God. The chambers of Hades, and the dust of the earth, and the caves of the ocean, shall restore their dread deposits, to be new composed, and they who are alive, and remain, shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Little children shall be there, and pure virgins, and meek confessors. Yes, and the old soldier-saints of God, the noble army of martyrs, the glorious company of the apostles, and the goodly fellowship of the prophets. Then, too, shall come to the bar of Jesus, the old antagonists and persecutors of the faithful; the stout sinners of all ages; the world's Nimrods and Lucifers, they who drove asunder the nations, and they at whose coming hell was moved, and stirred up her dead. "Multitudes,

multitudes in that valley of decision," each one standing in his lot; each with his cause known; the trumpet sounding; the books opening; the Judge descending; and small and great, all beholding him, in their common nothingness, together! The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Thenceforth men shall be great or small, according as they are Christ's, or according as he knows them not. This is the law by which there shall be surprising reversals of old positions and relations. Conquerors must give place to cottagers; princes to peasants; men of science to men of the soil. We shall see Cæsars, with their old historic brows unlaurelled, and many hidden saints disclosed with glittering crowns, and everlasting joy, upon their heads. Great poets and orators shall stand speechless, while unlearned and ignorant men shall break forth in the song of Moses and the Lamb. Wise philosophers and prudent statesmen shall be confounded by the sight of a dissolving universe, while babes and sucklings shall wake up in perfected strength, and calmly look for the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let each of us take home the more practical reflection, *I, too, shall be there.* Oh, my soul, shall it be on the right hand or on the left? Shall it be with those

wise virgins, who shall enter in and be with CHRIST forever, or with those foolish ones, who shall beat their breasts, and cry lamentably in darkness and despair—their lamps gone out, and the door forever shut ?

But there is great significance in the remaining words : *And they also which pierced Him.* St. John saw the side of Jesus opened, and the water and the blood that came out, and has recorded the prophecy of Zechariah—*They shall look on him whom they pierced.* Here he solemnly renews that prophecy, and if we reflect upon the historic period of the Apocalypse, we shall the better appreciate this reiterated assurance of final retribution. It was thus repeated, as it were, over the ashes of Jerusalem, and amid the wailing of the Jews, for the destruction of their church and nation. CHRIST had already come, in the typical judgment which he had promised to the men of that generation, and, with awful misgivings, the Jews began to recall the meek and lowly son of David whom they had rejected, and to wail because of Him, and thus to “look on him whom they had pierced.” At such a time Christ came, also, literally, to give the last assurance of his final coming. He appeared to his beloved disciple in Patmos, confirming his promise ; signifying

that the Mosaic dispensation was consummated in the judgment of Jerusalem, and testifying that nothing further remained but for the Gospel to run its course; and that, then, in due time, should come the great judgment, of which the prophetic pledges, or types, were now all fulfilled. The apostle repeats this message to the world, and reminds us that there is to be yet another reckoning with them that pierced Him. And let us not imagine that this means those poor blind Jews, and those brutal soldiers, who were the miserable instruments of the Redeemer's passion. With them the reckoning was more immediate. The Hebrews who cried "His blood be on us," perished, perhaps, on those crosses with which Titus garnished the ruins of their city; and perhaps those Romans who drove the nails through Jesus' hands, fell beneath the arrows which were shot from the besieged walls. But, oh, there remains a more terrible account for those who have crucified Him afresh. Alas! how many who have called themselves Christians, have out-heroded Herod in setting him at naught! how many, who have pretended to love him, have betrayed him, like Judas, with a kiss! how many, who have worn priestly raiments, have called his doctrine blasphemy, like Caiaphas! how many, who have

washed their hands like Pilate, have delivered him up to his enemies ! He shall “sit a priest upon his throne,” and then shall these also *look on him whom they pierced*. There shall be flatterers, as well as bitter mockers, in that miserable group ; Popes with Pagans ; Arius with Julian ; Socinus with Voltaire. Yes, the Galilæan will be conqueror in the end ! One look at Him, and they shall shrink into everlasting contempt. Oh, how often they denied and rejected him before men ; how long they were permitted to pronounce him altogether such an one as themselves ; through what weary ages they prolonged his passion ; how freely they made themselves his judges ; stripped him of his royalties, as God and king ; bared him to stark humanity ; scourged him with lies ; buffeted him with feigned words ; and hung him up on the tree of their false knowledge, mangled, and bleeding, and crucified, and slain ! And oh, how many have smitten him in persecuting his saints ; how many have pierced him in disregarding the cries of his poor, and despising his little ones ! And how shall these endure the sight of the same Jesus, revealed at last in all the glory of the Father, and exercising those prerogatives of the divine majesty which they have doubted, or insulted, or blas-

phemed? What though they reasoned, and disputed, and grew learned and philosophical, and were entirely satisfied with their own devices? Enough: *they shall look on Him!* Such shall be their sufficient refutation. Thus shall the creed of Caiaphas be confounded; and as they behold him in his glory, they shall remember the day when he stood in his humiliation before a human tribunal, and when Jesus said, "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

But when shall these things be? *Behold, he cometh!* The apostle seems to see him as he speaks, as indeed he did, in his vision, connecting it with the downfall of the Jewish state, and with those terrible visitations, such as the destruction of Pompeii, which, about the same time, gave the whole earth "signs of his coming." In the like words the ancient Enoch had cried—"Behold, the Lord cometh." But what mean these many promises and long delays? The definite object of these successive alarms will appear from the fact that each was connected with a contemporary judgment, which marked an advance in time towards the great consummation. Every stage of the world's progress, with reference to God's kingdom, has been

distinguished by a similar call, and a similar judgment. One great system of such calls runs through all history. The first period was that of Paradise; it ended in the call of God himself, "Adam, where art thou?"—and in the judgment—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The next period ended in the preaching of Enoch and the judgment of the flood. In the next, Noah was the great preacher, and the ministry of Abraham and Lot continued his testimony, until the fiery judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Abrahamic period ended in the mission of Moses, and in the plagues of Egypt. As the Mosaic period drew to its close, John Baptist proclaimed the first advent, which was consummated by the day that burned as an oven, when Jerusalem was brought low, while, at the same time, the Roman empire was terribly visited by earthquakes, and convulsions, and famines, and pestilences. "And now, beloved," says St. John, "it is the last time." The Christian dispensation is the last call of God; vengeance waits; mercy pleads; but judgment is coming. The apostolic ministry is the Elias of these latter days; the call you now hear, from a minister of Christ, is as really your call to judgment as will be the archangel's trumpet. It is the last

call of grace ; when the trumpet sounds, it will be too late to prepare.

And oh, how it thrills me, to reflect that the commission by which I stand here to speak, is itself your warrant for the truth of my message. Christ never gave a general commission to preach the Gospel, till he had been crucified and had risen from the dead. The Christian ministry is, therefore, a monument of the resurrection, and a voice from Him who "liveth and was dead." A call to judgment from one who thus came back from Hades to utter it, can leave no room for doubt as to its truth and its authority. "God will judge the world by that Man whom he hath ordained," says the apostle, "whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." And further, it is an ascended as well as a risen Redeemer, who speaks by us. We preach the message of one who is gone into heaven. The text is the testimony of an apostle who saw him after his ascension, and who heard, out of heaven, his promise, *Surely, I come quickly*. We know, then, that his coming is certain ; it cannot be long delayed. For the rest, not certainty, but uncertainty, is our best preparation. To seek to know the day and the hour, is the impatient enthusiasm of unbelief ; it is the part

of faith simply to watch, because at such a time as we think not, the Son of Man cometh. Specific as were the predictions of Daniel, concerning the first advent, we see that even the holy Simeon had only a general assurance that "he should not die till he had seen the Lord." As for the others, who "spake often one to another" on the delightful theme, they only waited patiently, and looked for the consolation of Israel. They lived not in the reckonings of their arithmetic, but in the assurance of their faith. So then, though he came "suddenly to his temple," not only Simeon but Anna found him there; and we, if we still seek the Lord, as they did, and wait patiently for him, shall "not be ashamed before Him, at his coming."

Finally, observe the sublimity of a single expression in the text, which remains to be noted: *With clouds!* How this imagery impresses the thought, and strikes the conscience. How solemn the message which comes to us, through the awe and wonder with which it excites our imagination. What an ideal vision is set before us in the impassioned exclamation, *Behold, he cometh!* How indistinct, yet graphic, the splendors of light and shade which are gathered about his appearing, by the additional words, *With clouds!* From the more minute

description of the Transfiguration, we know something further of the glory in which he shall be revealed. He shall appear as the Ancient of Days. His face shall shine as the sun, and his raiment shall be white and glistening. "Thus shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." When we remember the extreme humility of his first advent; that unseemly manger; that mechanic toil at Nazareth; those days when he had not where to lay his head; or, more especially, when we think of the many dogs that came about him, and how they wagged their heads at him, as he hung upon the cross; who but exults to think of his promised coming, in robes of glory, attended by the chariots of God, even thousands of angels, and riding upon the heavens, by his name JEHOVAH? There shall go before him the sound of that trumpet which was heard on Sinai, when Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." There will be thunderings and voices; the rending of sepulchres; the sea giving up her dead; the heavens passing away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat. Oh, then, while his saints shall rejoice to see their dear Lord at last, nothing shall so dismay the wicked as the splendor of his appearance, the loveliness and the glory of Him whom they

despised, the radiance of his countenance, and the majesty of his person. *They shall look on Him whom they pierced*; and the rending earth shall be more tolerable than the sight of their rejected Redeemer. “Fall on us, mountains; cover us, rocks;” (such shall be their wail of despair;) “hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Oh, in that day, good Lord deliver us! and now, in this day of salvation, give us grace, blessed Saviour, to cast away the works of darkness, and to put on us the armor of light. When we see thee, may we know thee; and oh, that thou mayest know us, and save us from this world which knoweth us not, that we may not be condemned with the world!

SERMON II.

PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT.

ADVENT SUNDAY.

BUT WHO MAY ABIDE THE DAY OF HIS COMING? AND WHO SHALL STAND WHEN HE APPEARETH?—Malachi iii. 2.

THE prophecy of Malachi, while it more immediately respects the coming of our Lord in the flesh, is so constructed as to serve a residuary purpose, and to afford us much instruction as to the advent which is yet future. Just as this season of the Church commingles in our minds these two stupendous themes, so that we hardly know whether the joy of Christmas, or the wholesome dread of judgment, is most prominently set before us, so the ancient prophet announces the one in terms singularly appropriate to the other, and reminds us that the first appearance of our God and Saviour was the type, as it is the assurance, of his second

coming. He who had said, "Lo! I come," did come accordingly; and just as certainly will he fulfil, in its season, his still pending promise, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

The first advent was in many things a type as well as a pledge of the second; more especially because, to the Jews, it was a day of judgment. It was the end of the Mosaic dispensation—as the general judgment will be of time and creation. To the Jews, therefore, it was the day that "burned as an oven." The Holy Child was no sooner born than he was "set for the fall, and rising again of many in Israel; that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed." His coming was the signal for great searchings of heart, among the pharisees, and scribes, and doctors. He was as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap, to the sons of Levi; he was a terror to Herod, and to all Jerusalem with him; and even to his faithful servants, who were prepared for his coming, he came, in an important sense, bringing not peace but a sword. The gospel tried men's souls; and nothing less than the faith and patience of true saints was found sufficient to abide the day of his coming, or to stand that appearing.

The grand challenge of the first advent was doubtless that of the day when the Saviour came to his temple, riding upon an ass, in great humility, but presenting himself according to prophecy, as the Son of David, and their promised Messiah. It was also a significant type of his coming, in his glorious majesty, at the last, calling the whole world to behold him as "a priest upon his throne," and to welcome him with the shout, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Accordingly, it was not long before all other signs of the typical judgment were gathered about Jerusalem. Its hills were covered with armies, and the saints of God alone knew the signs, and were able to escape. The day of vengeance soon settled upon the city; it was a day of burning and of ashes, in which the wicked were indeed "as stubble;" while in the horrors of rapine, butchery, and conflagration, the church and nation of the Hebrews passed away, because the blood of the Crucified was heavy upon their heads, and the day of their recompense had come.

We may be sure, then, that what was thus fulfilled in figure, according to the promise, will soon be fulfilled in the more awful reality of the universal judgment, and the dissolution of things created. The promise yet remains to be accom-

plished, in its broader meaning, "I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false-swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts." Such being the warning, the question still remains to enforce it, *Who may abide the day of his coming?*

Let this question ring in your ears to-day, and resound in your consciences so long as there remains anything to be done, on your part, to make its answer to you, individually, less portentous of evil. It is a question which we must meet now, in a practical way, or it will soon be too late to repeat it, except as the wail of a lost soul. It is a question which every one must confront, sooner or later; and more and more terrible will it be, the longer it is delayed. Let us look at it now, therefore, in all the earnestness of the wise inquiry, "What must I do to be saved."

If we turn to the examples of those who were able to stand the test of the first appearing, we shall be at no loss to decide as to the characters which are prepared for the day of judgment. Such as were Zacharias and Simeon, and the

blessed Mother of our Lord, and Elizabeth and Anna; such as looked for the consolation of Israel; such as feared the Lord, and spake often one to another, and thought upon his name; these loving and unworldly souls were they in whom the Lord fulfilled his promise—"they shall be mine in that day, when I make up my jewels." So, too, as that day of sifting and refining went on, and the thoughts of many hearts were revealed, we find some going away sorrowful, because of the terms of salvation; holding fast their great possessions, and rejecting the pearl of great price; while repentant publicans and weeping harlots, and here and there a rich man, leaving all and following Jesus, were accepted of him. Everywhere he was to that generation "like a refiner's fire." The sordid, the sensual, the earthly, were left as dross to a fiercer burning; he tried them as gold and silver are tried, and only the pure ore of the faithful and true heart escaped the assay, as a vessel of honor fit for the Master's use.

Does any one imagine that it shall be more tolerable in the day that shall try all things? Is it possible that any one who reads and hears the Gospel, and fails to apply its tests, rigidly and honestly, to conscience, or who, doing so, is conscious of an entire distaste for the service

of CHRIST, expects to escape in that day? Come, let us be honest with ourselves, and no longer endeavor to put by our chief concern in this life, which is the question of the text! Let us be sure that, forget it as we may, or close our eyes as we may to the awful truth, men are every day dying in their sins, all about us, and going to judgment, "condemned already." Let us thank GOD that it is not so with us; let us magnify his mercy, that has spared us yet a little while; let us resolve, at any cost, to lay hold on eternal life, while our mortal life yet remains; and in an awful sense of our danger from past neglect, and our possible hardness of heart, let us press to our souls the sharp point of the inquiry—*Who may abide the day of his coming?*

We may be quite sure, from our review of the character of those who were able to abide the day of the first advent, that just such characters will be the only ones who shall be safe in the last day. The test, therefore, is a very plain one, for the great characteristic of the early disciples was their practical contempt for this world, and their constant devotion to the pursuit of an eternal inheritance. They, practically, believed that this is no world to live in. They brought their minds to the solemn truth of the saying, "Vanity of vanities, all is vani-

ty." They came to the conclusion, therefore, that this world is good for nothing, save as it can be turned to account for a better; and, on this conviction, all their conduct was conformed to the pattern of things "unseen and eternal." They dreaded nothing so much as the possibility of having their portion here; of receiving their good things in time, and so becoming bankrupts in eternity. Hence, in view of their great reward, they counted nothing to which they were called a hard task, or a thing unreasonable. The half of their wealth they could give to the poor; wife and children, and houses and lands, they could leave at the Master's call; nay, peril of chains, and prison, and sword, they could face boldly; they could give their body to be burned, if so be that, at the last, they might receive it again, as a prey from the burning world; if only they might be found in CHRIST, perfect and entire, wanting nothing, with great riches laid up in heaven, and able to abide his coming, as men that wait for their Lord.

Now, nothing is more evident than the folly of refusing to imitate this wise example, with the same great object in view. For suppose a man determined to do otherwise, and resolved, at all events, to take his ease, and enjoy his

possessions and pleasures in this life. Can he do it? We are placed in this world only to decide the question as to our eternal portion; and no sooner do we settle it in favor of things present, than we are especially liable to an instant summons from death. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" There is no escaping the great question. To neglect it, is to determine. The only way to meet it effectually and wisely, is to resolve on the kind of life which God requires of those who would be saved—a life, that is, known and read of all men, as a walk with God; a denial of self; a seeking of a better city, even an heavenly; a laying up of treasures in heaven; a laying hold upon eternal life. And here let us guard against the fatal mistake of answering this question, which we must meet for ourselves, by another man's conscience. We see before us the gospel-pattern; we see around us men, professing to be Christians, living very differently. Let us guard, I say, against taking, as the standard, not the written law, by which we shall be judged, but the corrupt practice by which our neighbour is in danger of becoming *ε*, castaway. *Who may abide the day of his coming?* There is the question. "Not every one that saith

unto me, Lord, Lord." There is, in part, the answer. You will say, 'Must I, then, cease to add house to house, and field to field; must I let go my worldly wealth, my inheritance, or the fortune which is my reward for hard years of labor; my possessions, in which I have looked to take comfort for many years? Must I give all these to the poor?' The answer is very simple. Can you retain these things one minute beyond the time that God pleases to allot? Do you not see that they are not yours, but his? Do you not see that you are merely a tenant at will; a steward, who may at any moment be called to give account? Clearly, then, if your large house, your fine furniture, your many servants, and all that you so much value, are absorbing your five talents, so that there is no increase for the Master, you must give up these things, or else give up salvation. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." You have no right to waste so much on yourself; it is your Lord's money. If he lends you large means—if you are called, by his providence, to a stewardship of riches, he allows you, meanwhile, to live on his bounty, and to live comfortably, prosperously, and even with taste and elegance, according to your station. But, oh, the ingratitude, if you fail to perceive, in such goodness, the greater obligation to use

the residue for CHRIST ; especially as in so doing he credits you with all, and promises to reward you an hundred-fold in a world that shall have no end !

The law, I say, is a simple one. The time, the talents, the wealth, everything that belongs to one who is in earnest to be saved, belongs to CHRIST. So, in fact, do the talents of any man. He may use the world, only as not abusing it ; he may give to self only what does not interfere with his doing more abundantly for his Master. He may live in his ceiled house, provided he does not let the house of the Lord lie waste. He may clothe himself richly, provided he does not leave CHRIST to stand naked at his door, in the person of the poor. He may take, with thanksgiving, the bread that God gives him, day by day, in answer to his prayers ; but only so as he deals to the hungry what God himself asks back again, whenever the needy cry, or whenever the desolate heathen call for the bread of life.

And now does any one answer me, ‘Who then can be saved?’ I know that I have presented a standard of Christian life too little realized in our day ; but, on reflection, weighing my words, and searching the Scriptures, I cannot see that I am authorized to preach salvation on

any other terms. Nay, the more I study my Bible, the more and more do I feel horribly afraid, that there are few indeed who will be saved. Especially, when I read what CHRIST says concerning sins of omission—"Inasmuch as ye *did it not*,"—and compare it with the surprise of the condemned sinners, who say, "When saw we thee an hungered, and did not minister unto thee"—I feel it my duty to tell you, what I tell myself, that thousands are going to be lost forever, for the mere neglect of opportunities to do good, of which they now make no account, because they are absorbed in other things. This is our danger, brethren, and shall I fail to warn you that such is the case? It is my business, as a steward, to tell you plain truth; it is my burthen to deliver the word of the Lord as it is written. And shall I hazard the curse of your everlasting cry against me, for preaching unto you "smooth things?" Shall I sin against you, by concealing your real dangers, now that you have an opportunity of repenting, and of amending the life which is sure to be your eternal ruin unless it is repented of, and that speedily? God forbid! It is my duty, in season and out of season, to bid you flee from the wrath to come; and if so, more especially in this season, which the Bride, responding to the Spirit,

devotes to her Lord, that so she may prepare his children *to abide the day of his coming, and to stand when he appeareth.*

In short, then, the inquiry of the text receives its sufficient answer in these memorable words of St. Paul, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As if this plain language were not sufficiently explicit to make self-deception very hard, and to show that to mock GOD, with pretended or partial service, is impossible, the apostle continues, "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Now, can any man be in doubt whether he lives a fleshly or a spiritual life? To what objects are his days and nights, his thoughts and actions, chiefly directed? Is it "what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed;" or is it, on the contrary, "What can I do for CHRIST; how can I become an instrument of his mercy; how can I do something for his kingdom?" In short, are we providing for our flesh, how we can make it comfortable here, or is it our chief concern to provide for our soul, how we can make it happy everlastingly? We know, in our hearts, the truth as to this question. Well, accordingly,

you have the answer : a harvest of corruption, or a harvest of immortality ! Which shall be yours ? Will you, in the day of judgment, receive your flesh, as you bury it, a corrupt and consuming mass of earth, the prey of the worm that never dies, and of the fire that is not quenched ? Or will you receive a spiritual body, made like unto the body of Christ's glory, and fitted to enter with him into the eternal mansions which he has gone to prepare ? Ah ! my brethren, this is the question which you are answering, whether you will, or not, every day that you live in this world. Soon you will be carried to your graves ; the question will have been settled unalterably for you. The next thing will be the judgment. As you sow, so shall you reap.

Say not, then, that the day of the Lord is a terrible day, except as you reflect upon the great truth, that it shall be to you precisely what you choose to make it. After all, it is not judgment that is fearful, nor death ; but rather it is a fearful thing to live, where, every day, if we are not sowing to the Spirit, we are "treasuring to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath." To live on in sin, what is it but to write, over and over again, our eternal sentence, in those unerring books of God ? One day of sin is a fright-

ful thing. Think, then, of day after day of "sowing to the flesh;" days of the seared conscience, and the hardening heart; days that make blacker and blacker the page in which our names are written; days which make it sure that the Day of days shall reveal for us no portion in the heavens; that it shall exhibit our treasure, where we sowed it, in the dust and the ashes, and remove us from the flaming earth, only to consign us to a burning hell.

Plain as are the rules by which God has taught us to prepare for that day; and notwithstanding he has given us its ritual beforehand, so that we know the very questions and responses of the Great Advent, as we know the Epistles and Gospels for the preparatory solemnities of the Church, it is not to be doubted that it will be a day of great disappointments. "Many will say unto me, in that day, Lord, Lord; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Oh, let us beware of self-deception; but above all things, beware of hypocrisy! How much will then be revealed, according to the promise, that Christ shall "bring to light the hidden things of darkness!" What awful exhibitions of character will then justify the retributions of God! Even here we are startled,

when, from time to time, the mask falls from the face of the pharisee ; but that day shall unmask a multitude, who went through life with white raiment, in the sight of men ; who were never suspected here ; who had chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Then, for the first time, shall cunning thieves, and secret slanderers, and covert adulterers, be exposed, and stripped of their disguises, before angels and men, and made bare to shame and everlasting contempt. There will be murderers there, whose hands were not visibly red with blood, in time ; sinners against their brother, by cherished malice and persevering hate ; sinners against unborn life, when God only “ saw its substance, yet being imperfect ;” sinners against wife or husband, who were killed by cruelty and wrong ; sinners against the poor and needy, murdered by extortion and oppression ; all sinners against Him who will show his pierced side and say, “ Ye did it unto me.”

Beware, then, I repeat it, of cherishing a false hope. Oh, the pangs of finding out, too late, that life has been wasted in crying peace to one’s soul, when all the time there was no peace ! Let us ask ourselves boldly, Am I a true Christian, an Israelite indeed ? I know that God’s mercy is wonderful, and that he will

save unto the uttermost; but oh, my soul, is there any encouragement to believe he will save such as thou art? Are you a fit person, in any sense, to be made a companion of God's saints in glory? How shall you sing hallelujah in heaven, who never enjoy such music here on earth? How shall you be throned with CHRIST, who so seldom bow your knees in prayer at his footstool? How shall you find a place among men of prayer—men of bounty and mercy? How can CHRIST say to you, on any principle, whether of mercy or of justice, "Well done good and faithful servant?" On what grounds do you expect a crown for your head, and a palm for your hands? You a soldier! Who ever saw you fighting manfully under CHRIST'S banner? You a conqueror! What single lust of the flesh have you overcome, by prayer and fasting? What vanity of the world have you trampled under foot? What assault of the devil have you mightily resisted, in the strength of the Holy Ghost? Yes, brethren, let us ask our consciences these close questions. Put dear self, that old offender, to the bar, and judge your own selves, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Better now, than when it is too late, to wash and be clean; better a moment's

horror, and a life's repentance, than an eternity of agonizing disappointment, remorse and woe!

But who may abide the day of his coming? Rejoice, oh patient and faithful child of God, for though that day shall burn as an oven, it will be a joyful day for you. The world will, indeed, be burned up; but your treasures are not here; they are safe in heaven, and there shall you find them, manifold. Rejoice, for at last you will receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul. Rejoice, for even in that day of terrors it will still be true, that "as thy days so shall thy strength be." First of all, you shall receive your body from the dust; the vessel in which you served God, and did the works by which you are justified freely; a body "now no more to return to corruption." And lo! in this you shall stand in your lot; you shall see God; you shall no more have reason to fear. You shall be assured that your works of faith and love were all done to your unseen but all-seeing Lord; and, as such, were by him accepted and credited with amazing increase of reward. Then shall begin your triumph with CHRIST; the fulfilling of all your hopes, the repairing of all your sorrows. You shall rejoice in the triumph of right; you shall see Lazarus entering in to the marriage supper of the Lamb, while Dives

is sent empty away; you shall see the confessors and martyrs of JESUS avenged at last; all lies confuted and confounded, and Truth exalted and enthroned, and “upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” Then, while they who hated the Lord of glory, and railed against his gospel, receive the just reward of their malice, and of the evil which they did by their pestilent examples—“Lo! thus shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as afflicted him, and made no account of his labors. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for, saying, How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints.” Yes, believer, you shall abide his coming. Your Saviour shall bid you welcome to his right hand; you shall see him as he is; the same, “whom having not seen we love;” the same, “in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

SERMON III.

DEATH AND HADES.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS, AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT.—Ecclesiastes, xii. 7.

WITH the thought of judgment we naturally associate thoughts of death. And this is both reasonable and profitable, because, though judgment may be comparatively long delayed, our death, which is always near at hand, makes judgment practically near to us. All that we can do to prepare for judgment, must be done in the body; “for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” So, then, in this solemn season, while everything about us reminds us of decay; while nature is stripped of her gay colors, and the days are short and wintry; and while the world’s year dwindles towards its last minute,

making men think of the swift flight of time, whether they will or not; let us, too, think of death, though not in the world's way. For as, according to the Church's reckoning, it is the beginning and not the end of the year, so our thoughts of death and judgment are allied with those of hope, instead of despair. They are colored rather by the future than by the past. They stretch into a prospect from which the clouds are gradually breaking away, and which the great Sun of Righteousness illuminates and warms. "The day-spring from on high hath visited us;" and the valley of the shadow of death is no longer a terror to the believer, who should be always able to say, with Simeon, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The text seems to refer us to the primal sentence of our race, as passed upon our guilty forefather: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." It informs us, however, that when this sentence takes effect upon the body, our immortal part does not partake its grave, but "returns unto God who gave it." Thus, from the Christian's idea of death, the thought of unconscious slumber, and of absolute extinction, are alike excluded. To die is not more to leave this world than it is to enter another. Doubt-

less that which returns to God, goes into a place as fit for a reasonable soul as the grave is for decaying flesh; and so our thoughts of death should be shaped into reverent inquiries as to what God has revealed concerning the receptacle into which the soul of man must pass when his change comes.

When we reflect how thin a veil is between us and that abode of spirits, and how very soon we may find ourselves within it, how strange appears our ordinary indifference to what we may all know about death, if we choose! Our occupations may indeed be pressing, but each of us must find time to die; and, in fact, we are all dying at this moment. The law of death is even now working in our members; every breath we draw brings us nearer to that last expiring gasp which shall liberate our spirit from the flesh. The wood of our coffins may even now be grown among the trees of the forest; even the tissue of our shrouds may have been woven in the loom. God has set our day. In his book it is duly calendared; and duly must we in turn submit to the just decree which, without exception or mistake, through a long series of ages, has laid in the dust of death the successive generations of mankind.

But as for the mere struggles of dissolu-

tion, let us not think much of them. They may, or may not, be severe. They belong to sickness rather than to dying. Death itself is but the last breath. He who has swooned or fainted, has possibly suffered all of pain that is known to the departing soul, which the body dismisses with such frightful contortions and apparent agonies. Certain it is that believers have professed to suffer nothing, even while expiring in the flames of martyrdom. With the body's part in dying, we may at all events forbear to afflict ourselves beforehand; and it is a truly Christian practice to calm every shrinking forethought, with an ejaculation of sweet submission to the will of God. All in his own good time, and in his own wise way, let him deliver us from the burthen of the flesh; and if it be his gracious will, may our death be accomplished without extraordinary pain. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

With the body's part in dying, we are soon over, at the worst; and then it is left *to the earth as it was*—an unconscious clog, no more necessary to the soul's continued existence, than hair which has been shorn from the head, or garments which we have put by. The Christian knows, indeed, that he has not done with

it; it is part of his nature as man; he is to receive it again, out of the earth; and in it he is to see God. But that comes of the superabounding of life, in CHRIST, who not only takes away the sting of death, but despoils the grave of its victory. Meantime the spirit lives on without it; it *returns to God who gave it*; it is in the custody of its Creator. And here is the great thought of death, as being our instantaneous introduction to disembodied existence; to a state not natural nor final, but one of transition, and limited in its duration; to a state of conscious welfare or misery; to a state which is the unalterable foretaste of eternal happiness, or of death that is everlasting.

Concerning this state of the departed, much more is revealed than seems to be commonly understood. Holy Scripture speaks freely of a place which, strictly speaking, is neither heaven nor hell, but to which it gives the name *Sheol*, in the Hebrew, and in the Greek, *Hades*. Unfortunately, we give the same name, in English, to this *Sheol*, and to the place of final perdition, calling them *Hell* indifferently, and thus making painful confusion in the minds of the uninstructed. Suffice it, then, that as in the Father's house there are many mansions, and yet there is but one house, or heaven; so in *Sheol* there are two repositories of spirits, though

it is one Sheol. To Sheol descend alike the souls of all who die; but there each has "his own place;" the righteous in a refreshing abode, called paradise, and Abraham's bosom; the wicked in a place of torment, separated from paradise by an impassable gulf, or abyss. Such, then, is the receptacle of the dead, in which, while their bodies moulder in the earth, the souls of good and bad await the resurrection. Then, after judgment, soul and body together shall be glorified, or cast into the eternal flame. The final abode of the righteous is the heaven of heavens; the final prison of the lost is outer darkness, infinitely remote from the presence of GOD and the eternal home of his redeemed. But not till the resurrection and the judgment are the saints invited to enter the joy of their Lord; nor the wicked banished to that outer darkness, in the awful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

With this statement of Christian doctrine, all Scripture will be found coincident, while nothing can be more perplexing to the reader of GOD's word, than any other idea, whether borrowed from the Romish fiction of purgatory, or confused by the popular notions of immediate judgment, at the time of death. Thus the

psalmist inquires, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death, and shall he deliver his soul from the hand of *Sheol*?" According to this text, all go to one *Sheol*, though not necessarily to one condition or place therein. So too, the aged patriarch, lamenting his beloved Joseph, says, "I will go down to *Sheol*, to my son, mourning;" while to the same *Sheol* passed, together, the wicked Saul and the pious Jonathan, as the spirit of Samuel prophesied, saying, "To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." We infer that Samuel himself was also there, and that from this abode, GOD had permitted him to go forth, temporarily, to the earth. But while the Old Scriptures are full of similar allusions, it is from the pages of the New Testament that we gather clearer intimations concerning these invisible realities. Thus the rich man and Lazarus descended to the same *Sheol*, or Hades; though Lazarus was borne thither by angels, and reposed in Abraham's bosom, while the other, "in Hades, lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Between the twain we learn, moreover, that "there is a great gulf fixed;" and though even across that gulf words might be exchanged between Abraham and his reprobate son, we learn that to pass it is impossible, even for spirits disembodied. With

what is thus revealed by our Lord himself, agrees entirely what the Scripture relates concerning his descent into hell. "This day," said he to the penitent thief, "shalt thou be with me in paradise." That is, in that part of Sheol where the soul of Lazarus reposed in Abraham's bosom. And if, with this descent into Sheol, we connect that "preaching to the spirits in prison," of which St. Peter speaks, and which the Church has significantly selected as the Epistle for Easter Even, it is manifest that the Master of death may have crossed the great gulf, in demonstration of his power and sovereignty, and to give the nobler victory to the strong right hand by which he unloosed the pains of death, and went forth from Hades, and took again his flesh. It appears, moreover, by Abraham's example, that without actually passing into the prison, he might have preached to the spirits there confined, convincing them of the enormity of their sins, and informing them of his completed sacrifice, of which they, beforehand, had been the despisers and rejectors.

Thus of our blessed Saviour, it was true, as of those whom he has made his brethren, that his body *returned to the earth as it was*, and his human soul *to God who gave it*. Both his soul

and his flesh, however, were exempted from the ordinary lot of humanity. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," says the psalmist, speaking of CHRIST, "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." In the grave, his blessed body was untainted with decay; on the third day his soul returned from Sheol, and Jesus rose from the dead, to die no more. Thus, as St. Peter declares, he fulfilled what the psalmist had prophetically spoken of the descent into hell; and, not only so, but thus likewise he showed our way to his right hand. He had been in paradise, but had "not yet ascended to his Father," as he assured the wondering Magdalene. It was not till he had resumed his flesh, that he ascended into heaven; nor until we, like him, are clothed in our resurrection bodies, does he promise to receive us to his own presence, at the right hand of the Father.

That none of the saints departed are yet glorified with Him, is not less apparent from other Scriptures. David has doubtless been at rest, in paradise, ever since the day he fell asleep; yet of David, St. Peter expressly affirms, that he "is not yet ascended into the heavens." Our Lord says the same of all the just who had died before his incarnation. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that

came down from heaven, even the Son of Man."

In accordance with this doctrine, we may further observe, that a grand system of reservation, till the day of judgment, seems to include alike the righteous and the wicked, and also the rebel angels. St. Jude says "the angels which kept not their first estate, he hath *reserved*, in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." So St. Peter: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to *reserve* the unjust, until the day of judgment, to be punished." Miserable as are the lost angels and lost sinners now, they are but as convicted criminals in their confinement, awaiting sentence and final retribution. Lost spirits are wretched already; but they are reserved to the day of judgment, and to the resurrection of their bodies, to be cast into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Those angels also shall then be first consigned to the fire prepared for them. On the other hand, it is not till that day of consummation that the rewards of the righteous shall be complete. They, too, are reserved, for so St. Paul declares to Timothy, concerning himself:—"Henceforth there is *laid up for me* a crown of righteous-

ness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me *at that day*; and not to me only, but unto *all them also that love his appearing.*" On the rejection of these great truths, and by teaching that the greater saints already reign with Christ in glory; and by teaching, further, that great sinners may be admitted there by process of indulgences and prayers, before the judgment; the apostate papacy has built up its enormous system of Mariolatry, saint-worship, and masses for the dead. In accordance with the Scriptures, and the consistent testimony of the primitive Church, we believe, then, that the souls of the departed faithful are in joy and felicity; and we have also reason to believe that they enjoy, in paradise, at least the vision of Jesus. Such appears to be the intimation of St. Paul, when he "desires to depart and be with Christ," though he elsewhere speaks of the resurrection as the day of his great recompense; and again, says of that day, and "so shall we ever be with the Lord." The two ideas are nevertheless entirely harmonious, if we admit the vision of Jesus to be the unspeakable joy of paradise, and its antepast of heaven. The dying Stephen saw heaven opened, and Jesus "standing at the right hand of God." And uso, while he was yet in the flesh, and far away

in this lower world, surely we may believe that he has never since ceased to behold Him, from the border-land of the blessed. They see him there, perhaps, as he was seen by the apostles, when he was transfigured before them. But a still more glorious vision awaits them, at the last, for St. John says, "We know that *when He shall appear* we shall be like him, for we shall see him, *as he is.*" To see him *as he is*, in all his glory, is a joy, therefore, to which even apostles are reserved: the joy which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; the joy of joys prepared for those that love him. Meanwhile, albeit in inferior bliss, "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them."

Finally, if we examine those Scriptures which may be thought less harmonious with these statements, we shall find them, in fact, strictly in keeping with the entire mass of Scriptural testimony, as the Church receives it. For the translation of Enoch and Elijah, bodily, into the heavens, is by no means contrary to the idea that they have been ever since in paradise; in heavenly places, but not in the third heaven. The same explanation may apply to the marvellous case of those who rose with Jesus, as the first fruits of the general resurrection. St.

Paul, whose account of his miraculous rapture, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, has been thought by some to prove the identity of paradise and the third heaven, seems to me, on the other hand, to teach us expressly to distinguish them, by recording, as two several instances, and with marked exactness of narration, his two-fold admission into paradise and heaven, in the course of a single ecstasy; whether in the body, or out of the body, being unknown to him, and not revealed by the Spirit. So, at least, it was understood by the primitive fathers; and when an erratic genius of the third century first broached an opposite idea, he was rebuked by the common sense of the faithful, to which one gave utterance in the words, "Who can hearken to Origen, teaching that the place of paradise is the third heaven?"

There are some aspects of death in which it is poetically viewed, especially in the Old Testament, as dull, and dark, and insensible, and as greatly to be deplored. But such expressions are strictly appropriate only to the sad condition of the body, which no more beholds the light; which is degraded, and reduced to a mass of corruption; and which can no longer praise God; nor do works of faith in preparation for judgment; nor serve the Lord as an instrument

of propagating his truth, and of showing forth his glory. This being understood, how emphatic the assertion, that "the sting of death is sin." Even the mouldering flesh of the righteous is "subjected in hope," while his soul is immediately beatified in part. He knows, too, that body and soul together, he shall wake up after Christ's likeness, and thus be satisfied forever. It is only the death of the impenitent which is death indeed. The spirit enters into torment, and the body rots in the grave; and the only consummation to be anticipated is that of the second death, when body and soul, alike, shall be cast into the eternal fire, of which the pains of Hades, that torment the spirit only, are the mere foretaste and pledge.

In forgiving their sins, therefore, Jesus Christ has taken out the sting of death, for all that sleep in him. "They rest from their labours." Nay, he is said to have destroyed death, because to his saints it is now made the mere gate of entrance to immortality. Thus he has already fulfilled his promise, "Oh death, I will be thy plagues!" and when, by his mighty power, he empties Sheol, and makes the earth and sea restore their buried millions, then will he fulfill the residue of that promise, "Oh grave, I will be thy destruction!" Until Jesus died and rose

again, the sceptre of death was unbroken. Death reigned! But now he is a feeble and despised potentate. Jesus has mastered him; Christ's children defy him to separate them from his keeping; and only they who "love death," and cling to sin, are in any danger of exclusion, at the last, from that glorious city where there is no more death.

The day of a Christian's departure is, therefore, better indeed than the day of his birth. Oh bitter day that admits a soul into this bad world—its temptations; its fearful perils! Oh glorious day, that frees us from sin, and that, in one short moment, breaks the hold of death upon us, as mortals, forever! The death of the righteous is a triumph. The flesh is shaken, and removed like a cottage, but the soul breaks forth into the sunshine of the life eternal. Our blessed Saviour taught us the worst of a believer's death, when he said, "Lazarus sleepeth." And oh, the victory implied in that which is recorded of St. Stephen, that amid the curses of ferocious men, and bruised and mangled by the stones they were casting at him—"he fell asleep." Shall we then fear to die upon our pillows? Think of the consolations which wait, like angels, round the dying Christian: those holy ministries of his sweet mother, the Church,

the Bride of Christ; those precious promises which she rehearses out of Scripture; those visible services of Christian friends, and those unseen, but strengthening helps, which the angels of God hover around the scene to impart; above all, that presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; and that voice of Jesus, which breaks through the dark waters, as they close upon the soul, saying, "Fear not, I am with thee."

Perhaps, as the dying saint closes his eyes to this vain world, his spiritual vision is purged forthwith, and opens, like the first martyr's, upon the vision of Christ. "Behold, I see Jesus," is possibly the first utterance of the free spirit. At all events, the soul that, a moment before, was swooning and panting for deliverance, wakes up, as from a fearful dream, and is at once refreshed and strengthened by the sight of glorious angels, who are bearing him, on swift wings, to the repose of the saints. Oh, the joy of the hour, when the soul has fulfilled the appointment "once to die," and now, like Jesus, "dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him!" Even his imperfect blessedness is paradise; and then, after a little while, comes the consummated bliss of the res-

urrection ; and then, the eternal mansions, and the joy of the Lord !

What a contrast is furnished by the death in which there is no hope ! I do not intend to paint it, as it has been my lot to see it, nor to dwell upon the horrors of the scene, from which good angels turn away, and where, either the torpid conscience cheats itself into delusions, which a few minutes dispel forever, or else the despairing conscience seems to antedate the torments of perdition. But as the hour appointed is certainly near to every one of us, let me ask of each one that hears me, how he intends to die. For a moment, anticipate the day, and imagine your own dissolution as past, and look at the eternal consequences to your soul. At last, you too are no more ; men say of you—He is gone. They bear you to the narrow house appointed for all living, and lay the turf decently upon your grave, and lo ! the sexton's spade has smoothed your last bed, and the world is over with you, as with others. Where is your soul ? What do you think of the Gospel now, with its long, patient, and pressing offers of mercy ? And what do you think now of the world, which was so engrossing a few days ago ? Lo ! another dwells in

your house, and your name ceases to be spoken ; and the world whirls on as ever before ; and even your tombstone crumbles with its record of your name and birth ; and all the long, long time in which judgment delays, where is your poor soul ? And will it be better off when the Judgment also is over ? What, then, will you have received in exchange for your soul ? He who lives in unrepented sin, rises up and lies down, every day, as it were, on the treacherous outside of a devouring hell beneath him. He who dies in sin, must awake to judgment in all the beggary of the account which will confront him in those books that shall be opened ; and how shall he cancel that record of deeds done in the body, or hope to evade the awful memory of the heart-searching God ?

In conclusion, while I beg the worldly and frivolous to think thus of themselves ; and to look thus steadfastly at the horrid figure, that sits masked, and crowned with flowers, at all their feasts, and mingles in all their dances, and haunts their path by day, and their bed by night ; let me warn the consistent Christian that he should not even speak of death as the King of Terrors. To you he is no longer a tyrant ; for your elder brother, who is his Conqueror,

and who has the keys of death and of hell, has risen from the dead on purpose to deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Why should you continue in this bondage? Entreat the Lord to increase your faith, and remember that your Saviour has so "tasted death for every man," that if you die in the Lord, its bitterness will not be found in your cup at all. Learn, also, to think of the last messenger as your friend, and, if possible, cherish a submissive desire to depart and be with Christ. Visit often the sick and dying, that you may learn to die. Never shun a funeral, or stop your ears against a knell. Let such incidents as haunt and torture the superstitious, become to you welcome mementos against the night that cometh, and impressive calls to work while it is day. And sometimes, when you wake in the dark night, alone with God, call to mind the loneliness of the soul's departure, and let the night-watches hearken to your earnest ejaculations for a holy, happy death. Happy is the believer to whom things temporal cleave thus lightly, and who is always ready to put them off! Blessed JESUS, let none of us at last be disappointed of our hope! Be with us, oh thou Shepherd

of our souls, with thy rod, and thy staff, when our feet begin to stumble on the dark mountains, that so in us also may be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory!"

SERMON IV.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH THE DEVOURING FIRE?

WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH EVERLASTING BURNINGS?

Isaiah xxxiii. 14.

It is part of the duty of the ministers and stewards of the gospel of Christ, to warn men to flee from the wrath to come. And although the glad tidings of salvation are, in their nature, delightful to hear, and blessed to speak, it becomes us to remember that they imply the misery of fallen man, as justly liable to eternal judgment. If we preach salvation, 'tis because there is an everlasting perdition, from which souls may be rescued: if the message is a joyful one, 'tis because the peril is fearful. In short an atoning Saviour implies a lost world; the groans and the blood of Calvary, make it evident that the punishment from which Christ

offers to deliver us must be great. And since he never proposed to save us in our sins, but only as he saves us from them, it cannot be doubted that there is danger of eternal death, until eternal life is secured. Our commission to publish peace, is accompanied with the dreadful responsibility of warning men that "he that believeth not shall be damned." Such are some of the considerations which move me to continue the subject of Judgment, in connection with this terrible award : and painful as it is to perform this duty, I undertake it, not without prayer to GOD, that I may be so happy as to speak a word in season, to some soul in danger of perishing for ever. Blessed indeed this burthen of the Lord if what it pains me to utter, and what it may shock you to hear, may be so salutary in its impressions of wholesome fear, that we may, together, be wise in time, and so escape the damnation of hell. Which may the good Lord grant through the mercies and merits of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour. Amen.

In endeavouring to learn how one should testify concerning the wrath to come, I have turned to St. Paul, as the great doctor of the Gentiles, and I am overwhelmed with the conviction that if he be the model of a preacher, we ministers do not enough imitate his fidelity, in

“warning every man, night and day, with tears.” I am struck too with his sublime confidence in his Master’s promises, and with his not less sublime repose in His character, as alike merciful and just. He offers no apology for the Judge of the world ; he regards not the cavils of rebellious and unbelieving hearts ; he assumes that CHRIST will vindicate his own justice when he condemns the guilty, and that every lost sinner will be satisfied of his ill-deserts, and of his having destroyed his own self. So, then, I learn my duty, simply to testify to you what God has promised to do with the ungodly. I am not concerned to show what finite minds would make the law, but only what God has made it. I am bound to take my Master at his word, and not to dispute his truth by complimenting his mercies. When he bids me say, then, that “whosoever believeth not shall be damned ;” and when he explains himself by asserting that the punishment he awards to the guilty is perpetual, I must simply declare the message he has given me, beseeching you, of your own selves, to search the Scriptures whether these things are so. It is mine to blow the trumpet, and to preach judgment to come : it is yours to escape for your life, or your blood will be on your own heads. You hear the

gospel: if you do not obey it you will spend eternity in everlasting fire, as certainly as you now have the opportunity not merely of escaping GOD's just wrath, but of making sure your calling and election to eternal life.

Enough, then, that the very offer of salvation implies our universal condemnation to eternal death, and the great peril of our souls as subject to such a penalty. Concerning the actual sufferings of the finally lost, we are more fully warned, moreover, by many express assurances of Scripture. For example, the great prophet of the Gospel, whom we read so constantly at this season, mingles his rapturous anticipations of the Redeemer, with frequent repetitions of alarms, such as we have in the text; in which he clearly intimates the possibility of an eternal perdition, of which the pangs are those of perpetual fire. The same prophet, in one of our Advent Lessons, gives the name of Tophet to the terrible place of this unquenchable flame. The Hebrew supplies another name, "Gehenna," which is the synonym of Tophet, and this word is borrowed by the New Testament from the Old, and applied to the "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Thus then Tophet and its equivalent Gehenna, are the Scriptural names of that place of torment to

which we ordinarily confine the name of hell, and which should be distinguished from the intermediate abode of the lost, as being the eternal receptacle of their bodies, as well as of their souls. We must not forget that the existence of such a place is distinctly revealed, without reference to its name: yet the name itself is of importance, when we consider the origin of its application to a reality so unspeakably dreadful.

There was under the southern wall of Jerusalem, at the foot of the cliff on which the city sat as a queen, a valley once known as the beautiful Gehenna—the vale of the son of Hin-nom. In those days Gehenna, or Tophet, was a name associated with everything delightful to thought and sense; but when once it had been profaned by the detestable rites of Moloch; by the burning of human sacrifices, and by the practice of every enormity which the sinful heart could contrive, in the worship of devils, it became a speaking symbol of the place “ordained of old,” for the fallen angels. It was made the more striking type of hell, by the execrable uses to which it was finally condemned. The garbage and offal of the city were there deposited, and there became the prey of worms and noisome reptiles. To abate the baneful odours of such an accumulation, and to

prevent such a mass of filth from breeding pestilence, continual fires were kept up in the polluted valley. The sentinel who in the dark night patrolled the lofty walls of Jerusalem, beheld far beneath him the lurid flame, with its reek of poisonous vapour and fetid smoke. If Mount Zion served as a figure of heaven, no wonder then that Isaiah seized upon Tophet as affording the fit imagery of hell. "The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." Such is his impassioned description of the more terrible pit to which again he abruptly refers in the text: *Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?*

But our blessed Lord himself has employed the same imagery, and with still more striking reference to an eternal abode of misery. In the Tophet, beneath Jerusalem, the worm made his meal and perished; the fire smouldered till the season of the rains, and then was for a time put out. But our Saviour warns us against a Gehenna, whose fire "never shall be quenched;" and in his earnest appeal, while he exhorts us to pluck out the right eye, or cut off the right hand, rather than be cast with both into this dreadful hell, he repeats three several times, a lamentably descriptive wailing over

lost souls, in the words—"Where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched."

As for the history of this eternal Tophet, it was not prepared for men, but "for the devil and his angels." With this description of our Lord agrees St. Peter's testimony, that "God spared not the angels that fell, but cast them down to *Tartarus*, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." So too St. Jude: "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." They are now in chains, but not yet in prison; nor do their chains forbid them a range in this dark world, in which the prince of darkness has so many worshippers. Here, for a little longer, "they believe and tremble," as was evident when they cried out to Christ, "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" And here we who believe and hope, must maintain our fight with such terrible enemies of our salvation; for our contest is with Satan, as well as with the world and the flesh, and we wrestle not so much with flesh and blood as with him. If we suffer ourselves to become his captives, in spite of the stronghold in which Christ has placed us, and the

armor which he has given us, and the help which he has promised us, then our own must be the responsibility for the consequences. There is but one place in the wide universe for immortals, who have become hopelessly sinful, and though the prince of the power of the air is "the king" for whom it was originally prepared, the willing subjects of such a tyrant must share his kingdom with him. There is an eternal hell for the fallen angels, who never had a Saviour; why not, then, for men, who, having not only been redeemed from death by the atoning blood of God manifest in the flesh, but also endowed with an eternal inheritance at the right hand of their kinsman Redeemer, have sold their birthright for this world's pottage, and "crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?"

The place in which Dives was in torment, is a place of intolerable suffering; but we must reflect that, as yet, neither fallen angel nor lost son of Adam, has entered the unspeakable torments of Tophet. If, then, the place of spirits who have departed hence in their iniquity be such as the story of Dives gives us to understand, what may we not imagine concerning that world, in which soul and body together are consigned to everlasting flame?

And if, concerning the one, we are told that Moses and the prophets give us sufficient warning, surely CHRIST and his Gospel should suffice to make us wise in time, through salutary fear of the other. At all events, no warning will be given, other than that which the Scriptures unfold, which the Church repeats, and which the heralds of the second advent proclaim, when they preach the Gospel. If a lost soul could rise from the dead, and tell us of the misery which he now suffers, and from which he can no longer escape, but which he knows must be worse after judgment—if this could be, do ye think that men would repent? Yet He who is to be our judge, has taught us that they would not, if they do not, without such an interposition, obey the Gospel. In a word, “they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.”

To the law, then, and to the testimony, let us refer, for our sufficient witness, “lest we also come into that place of torment.” Let us not shrink from a serious inquiry as to that world which we must certainly inhabit forever, if we resolve to receive our good things in this life. Though the Holy Scriptures do not abound in the terrors of the Lord, so much as they do in displays of his saving mercy, they, neverthe-

less, reveal enough to make us horribly afraid. The torments of the lost are described as both internal and external, as those of the gnawing worm, and those of the burning fire; within, remorse, horror, and despair; without, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Here it is inquired, indeed, whether the worm is a real worm, or the flame a real flame. Alas! there is no comfort, in any possible reply, which we can frame from reason, or from the word of God. Is the crown of glory a real crown? Is the light of heaven a real light? Doubtless, all that we call light on earth is infinitely transcended by the effulgence of God's presence; and what paltry trinkets are the diadems of the Cæsars, compared with the stars that shall shine forever, on the heads of the children of God! But if such be the case with the glories of heaven, as compared with the bright things of earth, what must we argue, in following the analogy, as to the pains of hell? Here, we know of nothing that is real; the things of this world are only symbols; mere figures, by which God gives us ideas of the great realities. As, at the resurrection, "the wise shall inherit glory, so shame shall be the promotion of fools;" and if that glory is such as surpasses speech, let us not doubt that, on the other hand, the

shame of the wicked shall arise, in part, from a perception of their unutterable folly in amusing themselves while on earth, with an underestimate of everlasting burnings. It is a favorite saying with some, that it is impossible that material fire should torment an immaterial spirit. But how can this be known, considering the pain which even now we constantly suffer in spirit, from our material bodies? Our experience is against their rash conclusion; or, if otherwise, it can only reduce to a figurative description the fiery pangs of the soul in intermediate torment. - For as to the condemned in Tophet, they shall have bodies, as well as souls; the corrupt and noisome bodies of their resurrection to everlasting contempt; bodies, of eternal rottenness and worms, concerning which CHRIST says, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

When Holy Scripture informs me, then, that CHRIST is coming in light and majesty, I believe it. When it adds, that he shall be "revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God," I believe that too. The light, I believe, will illuminate gloriously; the flame, I cannot doubt, will burn severely. But, what if these be figures, by which GOD merely interprets to us things beyond conception? Let us

admit that, in some degree, they are so. Yet, alas! I see in even this no consolation for the wicked. These figures may mean more than they portray. There will still be remorse, like that of horrid dreams, but more intense, to which the gnawings of a worm would be soothing. There will still be misery, to which the gnashing of teeth could add no further pain; there will still be consuming pangs, to which fire might be as water. What does it help my case, if I be among those who hear the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed?" And what madness it is for me to stand trifling with such questions, as to fires material and fires figurative, when I have to do with a GOD, who declares that he is a consuming fire, and when I hear the appeal of his holy apostle, "And thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Hear him further. "But after thy hardness, and impenitent heart, treasurest up, unto thyself, wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." He goes on, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds, to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but

obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God."

If such be the nature of the punishment of sin, we learn that as to its duration, it is everlasting. In a word, perpetual sinners suffer as long as they sin. Does any man recoil at this thought of unending retribution? So do I. The more I think of it, the more I am confounded by the thought. It makes the very devils tremble. They tremble because they believe, while they try to make men doubt. But oh, it is because I am staggered and overwhelmed by what God declares on this subject, that I dare not trifle with what He says. Sifting my Bible for the final conclusions of a believer on this matter; reading it over and over, with the aid that God requires us to use in interpreting His word; yea, consulting what scholars have speculated, and even what fools have drivelled, as to future punishment, it comes, after all, to this, that if there be an eternal heaven, there is also an eternal hell. There it stands, in the text and elsewhere, so plain that he that runs may read. *Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* I

know that ingenious men have congratulated themselves on the success of their experiments with these and other like words. They have cut them up with a penknife, like king Jehoiakim, and have "burned the roll," as if that disposed of the threatenings of the Most High. But if these speculators can brave eternal hell under shelter of their ingenuity, I confess I dare not keep them company. How reads the Law? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Now, if I venture to defy this law, will the Judge admit the plea of the ingenious construction I give to such plain terms? Do judges deal thus with culprits in human courts? And shall I presume to trifle thus with a law which was given amid the thunders of Sinai? Do I not see, already, that its violation is a fearful thing, and has filled the earth with misery? Can I fail to draw an inference from the fact, that not even the saints of GOD can be saved at a less price than that of the atoning blood of the Only-begotten of the Father? And when I reflect on the agonies of Gethsemane, and the expiring outcry of the Redeemer, am I not taught that the sin for which His infinite merit makes no effectual atonement, must exact an infinite penalty of the sinner who chooses to take his own deserts, and who de-

spises mercy? Look at the Son of GOD, and see what it cost him to redeem your soul. Now, if you reject that vicarious suffering, with its immensity of worth, what may you not expect to suffer in your own person, both as a sinner and as a despiser of pardon? "If such things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Brethren, "let no man deceive you with vain words." Let not your own flattering hearts persuade you that there may be a chance of escape. In vain do men file and pare away the rough words of Scripture. The grub is not more active in perforating timber, than critics have been in eating out the threats and warnings of the Gospel; but the Bible is not yet reduced to such a honeycomb as they count sweet. Its very existence, as a revelation, implies much which they would gladly deny; and its entire spirit presupposes the severity of GOD, as well as his goodness. There can be no faith in CHRIST, as an atoning priest, where there is no fear of GOD as "a consuming fire;" and he that would persuade himself that there is no hell, must begin by saying, "There is no GOD." There was, indeed, an old critic, who taught men to believe that the very reverse of GOD's words, is what they really mean; but he was

a liar, as well as “a murderer, from the beginning,” and he is the father of all those who dare to say to sinners, “Ye shall not surely die.”

No, then, unless the just can be despoiled of their hopes of glory, by similar jugglery, the wicked must accept CHRIST, or assure themselves of eternal punishment. I call your attention to the confirmation which this solemn conclusion receives from the unanimous and uninterrupted testimony of the Church, from the apostolic times until now. It is impossible that the early Church should have been mistaken on this point. She knew the mind of her dear Lord. The Spirit led her into all truth. Yet never has she had any diversity of doctrine as to the existence of Gehenna, and its eternal torments. In the words of the Athanasian hymn, “They that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.” Yes, even now, there is no difference in Apostolic Christendom, upon this great matter, divided as we are on so many other things. The doctrine is confessed, in the words I have quoted, by Anglicans as well as by Romans, and in substance it is received by us, and by the Greeks. Why

this universal concurrence in a tenet which human nature would gladly disallow? Our feelings recoil from the horrible idea, and sometimes threaten to shake our faith. But so apostles preached, so, therefore, we believe. Against such testimony as this; in spite of Scripture, witnessed by the Church, in terms so plain; how daring is the man who, on the thread of his own private speculation, can suspend his immortal soul over a lake of everlasting fire!

Some, indeed, have amused themselves with fancies as to a final restoration. But this is an absurdity which not only lacks a single ray of countenance from Scripture, but which reason must laugh to scorn. Are the fires of hell capable of satisfying God for sins for which the sweet savour of the merits of CHRIST has ascended all in vain? Or is hell a school of reform? May one expect to grow fit for heaven in the company of devils? One who grows harder and harder of heart, here amid all the means of grace, where JESUS invites, and the Bride says *come*, and the Spirit pleads? And shall Tophet thus effect what the Church of CHRIST could not? Shall the curses and blasphemies of the damned prove a better gospel than that of evangelists and apostles? Alas! is it not written that after a certain hour, "the door is

shut?" The Mediator's work closes with the judgment; who then shall intercede? The Spirit strives no more with men; who shall sanctify lost souls? He that hath the keys of David hath shut, and who shall open? Who shall reverse his terrible decree—"he that is filthy let him be filthy still?" It is startling indeed to reflect that such words can be pronounced by our compassionate Redeemer, and yet who can deny that they are entirely consistent with his whole manifestation of himself while here on earth? How often did the meek and lowly Saviour give us intimations of the righteous indignation, with which he shall finally appear as the judge of those who reject his atonement! It was the same Jesus who wept over Jerusalem, and said, "How often would I have gathered you," that said, nevertheless, to the same people, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell!"

True, indeed, "one star differeth from another star in glory," and 'tis but reason to infer that there shall be degrees of punishment in the abode of the lost. They that knew but little shall have the fewer stripes. It shall be "more tolerable" for Tyre and Sidon than for Capernaum. But why should this melancholy

abatement reconcile any one who can repent, to anything short of salvation? I speak now to that most difficult of all characters to deal with, the man that flatters himself that though he is not perhaps good enough for heaven, he is surely not quite bad enough for hell. Oh! how little that man knows his own corrupt, rebellious, and deceitful heart. Has he never read of the servant from whom in judgment shall be taken even that which "he seemeth to have?" And what is that? Morality, without godliness; a mere outside! To what does it amount? Take away the influences of social life; those secondary blessings of Christian civilization, its restraints, and decencies, and what remains? Morality, indeed! What is it but a clever counterfeit, all the worse for its close resemblance to what is sterling? And then what an abuse of the means of grace, when a man steals from Scripture and the Church a rule of outward propriety, of which he takes the whole credit to himself! It is indeed a merit which he *seems* to have, but that is all. The Spirit of God once withdrawn, and conscience thus extinguished—behold the miserable wretch that is left. Then indeed sin revives, and he dies of the disease which he would not believe was working within him, so

long as his countenance was fair. The unrenewed heart, believe it, is desperately wicked. So long as there is no love of Christ in the soul, the man is a leper, let him seem what he may. You have read of some daring felon, or of some polluted woman. She whose person is so loathsome to-day, and whose fall from the purity of her sex is so unutterably horrible, but yesterday was a maiden, in her guilelessness, unable to conceive as possible, that shame which is now her unalterable portion. The pirate, too, whose very name sounds like that of a fiend, was only a few short years ago a babe on his mother's bosom, drawing the sweet nurture of innocence, and fondled with delight in the arms of love. What is virtue, what is innocence, what is character, that has not the Redeemer for its strength? How long does it take the human heart, when the Spirit is grieved away, to show out its hideousness and its corruption? He who knows the pharisee so much better than he knows himself, has pronounced his morality a whited sepulchre, and assigns him a place with those who took no oil in their vessels with their lamps. And where were they when their lamps had gone out?

In view of this stripping of the mere moralist, I look in vain for anything that can minis-

ter hope, to one who would not be eternally lost, short of "the broken and the contrite heart." And if the goodness that leadeth thee to repentance be, all thy life-time, despised, pray who is it that condemns thee? Is it God, or is it thyself? How few understand their probable account with GOD! How few think of their responsibility for the means of grace! Many a man is far more guilty than thousands whom he considers the wicked. They, indeed, are hardened in sin; but oh, how little have they sinned against privileges, and light, and mercy; and how little guilty they may be in the sight of GOD! But here is one who, in spite of all that GOD could do for him, has lived all his life-time, doing little for his fellow-men, and for GOD, nothing at all. Granted he was a good citizen, friend, father, and the like—but these were his relations with men, and he had his reward. Had he no relations to a GOD who created him, who fed him with good things all his life long, and gave him time and occasion for repentance? Had he no relations to a Saviour, who died for him? None to a Spirit, that strove with his conscience daily, till he was grieved away? And yet what has he ever done, in honor of these relations? He wearied GOD all his life long, with a sturdy refusal to

repent and obey, and be a Christian. He was blest in basket and in store, and he grew proud and self-satisfied. He was made sick, and he murmured; he was restored again, but he gave no thanks, or his thanks were only words. He heard sermons, and steeled his conscience against them; he read the Scriptures, but always closed the book, saying, "Go thy way for this time." And as he lived, so he died—a stubborn refuser of the blood of sprinkling. Does this man's case call for fewer stripes, than that of the poor wretch who was tempted to be a thief, or a murderer, because, perhaps, he never ate a comfortable meal? Believe it, brethren, among unrepenting sinners, there is not so vast a difference as men suppose. He who sees the heart, and accepts no man's person, judges very differently from men; and I tremble to look around me, when I think that it was to respectable men, to men of standing and of reputation, that Jesus said, "The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before you."

Beware, then, how you listen to those who cry, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace*; who would beguile you, with some subtilty, to believe that the way to life is not narrow, nor its gate strait; or who would even persuade you

that Judas and St. Paul inherit the same eternal glory; or that the same paradise received the thief who repented, and the other who died blaspheming Jesus, and gnashing upon him with his teeth. Oh, wherefore is it that men can be persuaded to believe anything, except only that "now is the accepted time; that now is the day of salvation?" Here is the true resource. As a faithful servant of Christ, I cannot pretend that there is no danger; but I can bring you glad tidings, in preaching a crucified Saviour, and in showing you how you may flee from the wrath to come. The thought that any one who now hears me may be lost eternally, is horrible indeed. But why should it be so, when, even now, he is offered free salvation? "Before the gates of Gehenna," says St. Augustine, "sits the divine Mercy; none that seek unto her does she suffer to enter there."

We are preparing to rejoice in a Saviour's birth; to exult in Him of whom it is written, "Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other." Believe it, it is not so much for having despised Moses' law, as for having rejected CHRIST'S Gospel, that Vengeance will claim its own at the last. Prepare your hearts, then, I beseech you, to stand before the Son of Man. He comes to

a world of sinners, that he may save them. If he saves not you, your own will be the fault; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

SERMON V.

THE REWARDS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD MEN HAVE NOT HEARD, NOR PERCEIVED BY THE EAR, NEITHER HATH THE EYE SEEN, OH GOD, BESIDE THEE, WHAT HE HATH PREPARED FOR HIM THAT WAITETH FOR HIM.—Isaiah, lxiv. 4.

THE subjects on which I have spoken to you during the former Sundays in Advent, have been such as it has been painful to discuss, and perhaps you have heard me with impatience. “Knowing the terrors of the Lord,” we must nevertheless, endeavour “to persuade men,” and that whether they will hear, or will forbear. But I come now to a theme, co-relative, yet widely different; upon which, though it be, indeed, too high for me, it is delightful to think, and of which I count it one of my dearest privileges to speak. Whether it will be profitable to your souls, however, depends

under God, upon yourselves alone. It certainly will do no good, if it be heard in a spirit of rebellion against those sterner truths with which it is connected. The punishment of the wicked is, in all respects, as certain, as are the rewards of the just. Oh! that I might turn many to to righteousness, by exhibiting, in due proportions, the justice and the mercy of God! Oh! that in speaking of heaven, I might borrow something from the spirit of the approaching feast; something from that song of the angels which brought heaven down to earth, in the strain of "peace on earth, and good-will to men."

The kingdom of heaven was said to be at hand, when the Baptist proclaimed the incarnation of the Son of God. In a word, the court of heaven was about to appear, in the person of the king himself. It is the presence of the sovereign that makes the court, and, in a sense, the kingdom. Under the Law, there had been a mere viceroyalty. The Jewish Church possessed only shadows of heavenly things; patterns of things eternal; figures of the true. So St. Paul describes them. But now, in CHRIST, all heaven was coming to this lower world. The Gospel was to perpetuate the substance of the kingdom, among men. The

bounds of the heavenly empire were to be enlarged, so as to include the communion of saints, in the militant state; and thus CHRIST'S kingdom was to invade the territory of Satan, and to push its conquests, till the end of time, into the realms of sin and death.

Ever since the incarnation, CHRIST, by His Spirit, has been present in His Church, as His Church has been present and visible, in the world. So we find the Church often spoken of, in Scripture, as the kingdom of heaven; because it is that kingdom, in the earth. The militant Church is, indeed, an outlying territory, and grievously beset by foes, and infested by traitors; and yet it is the kingdom, because the king dwells in it, and governs it, and enlarges it, and defends it against the gates of hell. Moreover, it is closely joined to the great seat of empire above; for "God is in the midst of her;" and through her broad domain, flows that same "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."

But then, there is a "land which is very far off," where they "behold the king in his beauty." The capital of the kingdom is there. There is the metropolis, and there the court

resides. We are in the empire, even here. No more strangers and foreigners, we are recognized as fellow-citizens, and children, and heirs; but whether we shall ever reach that mother city, and make our calling eternally sure, is the question which our lives are deciding. One may be in a great empire, and yet know little of its palaces. One may even be a great king's son, and yet be living remote from his father, under tutors and governors, and differing nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all. But when at length, this heir of royalty is brought to court, to what is he not introduced? There is the palace and its gardens; there are its many mansions; there are halls that glisten with marbles and with gold; and long galleries resplendent with sculpture and pictures. There is the gallantry of company, and the bravery of apparel; there is the harmony of music, and the pomp of feasts and pageants; and above all, there is the majesty of the sovereign, the soul and centre, about which all this beauty and magnificence revolve, like planets around the sun. But this is all vanity. It is poor, even as an illustration of that which the humblest child of God is heir to, and which he may, if he will, secure. It may help us, however, to understand what

St. Paul says of our condition in the militant Church : “ Ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Here he asserts, that whenever we are recalled from Hades, and clothed with our new bodies in the resurrection, then shall come the investiture ; then we shall enter upon our inheritance ; then the King of kings, and Lord of lords shall manifest us to the whole universe, as indeed, his children, and joint-heirs, with CHRIST, of the kingdom and the glory.

So then the Apostle adds, “ The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” While in this state of discipline and hope, the heir of God is not manifested but hidden. He is perhaps meanly lodged and clothed ; he is made to endure hardships ; he is drilled and tasked ; he is punished for his faults ; and very often, he sends complaints to his royal father, of the sorrows and sufferings of his pupilage. But his Father in heaven assures him that it is good for him, and bids him be comforted by the thought that thus one becomes fit for a crown, and is the better prepared to enjoy the pleasures of a court. At last, after long expectation, comes

the day of "the manifestation of the sons of God." The king shall sit upon his throne amid ten thousand angels. Then shall the children of the kingdom shine in all the splendor of the resurrection, and be welcomed to the eternal presence of the Godhead, and to the right hand of CHRIST, where there are pleasures forevermore.

Thus will be fulfilled that promise of CHRIST, "Fear not little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The kingdom, even here on earth, is to be given to the saints; it is coming to heathen lands, and is yet to embrace all the kingdoms of the world. The same kingdom includes those seats of joy and felicity in paradise, where the souls of the faithful enjoy the vision of God, and wait, with us, the redemption of their bodies. But, in that day, the heavens and the earth will have passed away, and Hades shall have been made empty. The kingdom of heaven, to which the righteous shall then be admitted, will be the heaven of heavens; the place where the glorious Trinity is beheld unveiled; the heavenly Jerusalem, which the glory of the Lord doth lighten, and the Lamb is the light thereof. This is that place of many mansions, which our blessed Saviour is now pre-

paring for his little flock. As yet, one man only is there—the man Christ Jesus: and he has promised to come again to receive us unto himself, that where he is we may be also.

This was the promise which our Lord seems to have desired to guard against all misapprehension, when, upon his reappearance after the resurrection, he said to Magdalene, “I am not yet ascended to my Father”—adding the message to the Apostles, that he was now about to go into heaven: “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my GOD and your GOD.” In his Godhead he had never been absent from heaven; but his human nature was not yet exalted to the throne. No man had ever yet ascended into the heavens: Enoch and Elijah had undergone some change, unknown to us, and had been admitted to heavenly places; but now the Son of Man was to enter the heaven of heavens, and humanity in him was to be exalted above angels, and crowned with glory and honor, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he sits, at this moment, in all his glory, our elder brother, and our God: bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and yet our Maker and our Saviour. He is not ashamed to call us brethren; and as our kinsman Redeemer is there already, we have the pledge

of our inheritance in the fact of the ascension. There, Jesus is "for us entered;" and he has promised that where he is, we shall be also. Oh! surpassing joy of the believer! Who that hopes for such things, but must exclaim with the Apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us!"

The final abode of the righteous, then, is that place of many mansions which CHRIST is now preparing, though in another sense it was prepared for the sons of GOD, from the foundation of the world. When angels fell, then were their places left for men to inherit: but a long process of preparation was necessary before they should be entered upon. Creation first, with subsequent sin and ruin; redemption and regeneration afterward; and "the purifying of the heavenly things themselves" with the blood of sprinkling, and the presence of the great High-priest. If, then, we ask where heaven is, we must answer, there, where CHRIST is now, making intercession for us, within the veil. When we look up at the visible heavens, which Scripture so often makes to us the symbol of a more excellent glory, we cannot but feel as if our inheritance were there. The Scrip-

tures speak of the ascension, as a taking up: and the Apostles saw their Lord mounting into the skies, till a cloud received him out of their sight. Now we know that *upward*, when used with reference to our earth, means, simply, away from its centre, in whatever direction. The expanse of the air, then, is one heaven: and the starry worlds are another; and beyond all these our Saviour passed, bodily, into the third heaven, or the heaven of heavens, where the angels are, and where is the visible presence of Jehovah. More than this, as to place, we cannot know: but the Apostle speaks of it as "high above all height;" and thither, if CHRIST is our chief treasure, our hearts will ascend, even while we are pilgrims upon earth, and there with Him, in spirit, we shall continually dwell.

When CHRIST shall invite us, at last, to enter that eternal inheritance, it shall be with a welcome to "the joy of our Lord." Even now, as one has remarked, a little of heavenly joy may enter us: but then, it shall be our entering of it. But as we are exhorted to set our affections on things above, we may lawfully inquire, what that joy of heaven shall be. Nor shall we long wait for an answer, if we search the Scriptures. True indeed, *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*; but then, all that speech can

tell, and all that it is good for us to know, is revealed to us, in the Word of GOD, and it is blessed to comfort one another with such words. For example, though we possess so little of joy, in this vale of tears, that our vocabulary of bliss is a meagre store-house for terms descriptive of the joys of angels, it has pleased GOD, in condescending to our infirmities, to tell us much in negatives. We must wait for our glorified souls and bodies to know, positively, of what their new powers and faculties may be capable: but we know how much we suffer, in our present bodies, while we wait for the adoption. So then, GOD has told us there shall be no more hunger, nor tears: "and there shall be no more death: neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain." Who that has ever suffered such things; who that has seen sweet children suffer, or beloved, gentle friends, long and patiently, day after day, hour after hour; who that has watched by dying beds, can recall such a promise, without a panting after heaven; a longing to see GOD; a desire to depart, and be with CHRIST? Refreshing foretaste of heaven itself, in this world of sorrow, to know that there is a world "where there is no more death, no more pain!"

But it is not only a negative idea of heaven with which Scripture indulges us. We have many precious promises which we can, in some measure, comprehend. We are assured, for example, that heaven will be within us, as well as in all about us. We are to have bodies made like unto the body of Christ's glory. Our spirits are to be made perfect; we are to be "equal to the angels." As in Eden, before the fall, the powers and faculties of the first man were suited to the surpassing delightfulness of that blest abode; so our new powers will be infinitely exalted, to be in harmony with heaven. Fearfully are we beggared by our first father's sin! We are stripped of the noblest properties that belonged to humanity, as GOD created it, in his own likeness. But infinitely are we to be enriched, in the second Adam, above all that we should have been, had we never fallen. It may be doubted whether, in our present state of sin and misery, we are not lower in the scale of intelligence, as compared with Gabriel, than a newborn babe is, as compared with a Newton: yet, to be equal with Gabriel himself shall be the lot of redeemed humanity. Since God has passed by angels, and identified himself with men, by taking manhood into God, he has commensurately changed the relative positions of

human and angelic natures, and hereafter, angels are to be made a little lower than redeemed saints, in their inheritance of light. Oh miracle of redeeming grace, that because we have been much forgiven, we shall love more than they that never sinned! The blessed angels cannot celebrate, as we shall, instinctively, the wonders of redemption. Only they who have come out of great tribulation, shall know the full rapture of that eternal rest. Who but they who have been mortal, can fully appreciate immortality? Who, but they, to whom the name of Jesus has been "balsam in the heart," shall enjoy its fragrance supremely as "ointment poured forth," or know it most ravishingly as "music in the ear, and honey to the tongue!"

Wonder not, then, at the testimony of Isaiah, in the text, endorsed and repeated as it is by the glorious Apostle St. Paul. To know more, we must wait for angelic powers. All is revealed that we can comprehend with our present faculties. God has revealed to faith, a few of those incomprehensible mysteries, which it concerns us to know, and how do men receive them? How many stumble because of them, and murmur when their finite minds attempt to explore the Infinite! Heavenly

things are necessarily too high for us. The language of mortal tongues staggers and fails, when the glorious things of God become its unwonted burthen. Even worship, when it is becoming, does no more than echo back to heaven, its own *Gloria in Excelsis*. When our faith would confess to God it borrows God's own strength. What are the Creeds, but the Scriptures? What is *Te Deum* but the well-marshaled words of inspiration? What the *Trisagion*, but the anthem of angels; language suffused with heaven? So then, for want of power to receive them, the things prepared for men, have never yet entered the heart of man: we cannot conceive what they are, or if we could, it would be heaven itself, to which flesh and blood can have no claim. When we are made equal to the angels, then may we know the joys of angels. But, till then, who shall paint colours for the blind, or describe music to the deaf? If we should attempt to convey ideas of the rainbow to a worm, or of the melody of the human voice to an adder, we should probably be as successful as our guardian angels would be, should they, at any time, endeavour to unfold to us, the joys in which they perpetually exult, or the glories of that inner heaven, in which they behold the Father,

and, compared with which, the glittering firmament is darkness, and the sun itself a cloud.

In the gorgeous imagery of the Apocalypse, we are indeed presented with such conceptions of the New Jerusalem, as our feeble powers, and scant store of figures, enable us to appreciate. But what mean those gates of pearls, and streets of gold, and harpers harping with their harps; those vials full of odours, and palms in their hands; those rivers of crystal, and trees of life, and all that varied scenery of the land of Beulah? Are these things real? "There is," says St. Paul, "a spiritual body:" is that real? Is not flesh vanity, and the spirit the only substance? So then the glorious things of earth are but patterns, shadows, figures of the true. In heaven are realities, and here the poor, faint symbols whereby God affords us notions of things unseen, and eternal. There, are pearls and gold; here, there are but emblems in sordid matter, to which we give the names. There, are immortal flowers, and here, their fading tokens. There, are harps and viols, and here, are wretched imitations of those celestial instruments. There, is the harmony of voices, and here, is only the straining of fleshy organs, to realize something of their sound. There, in short, are rivers and trees, and gardens of

which Eden was but a miniature; while all that we call glorious, here below, in the material landscape, is but a fainter copy of the visions reserved for immortal eyes: scenes of no transient or decaying beauty, but those of the heavenly Canaan; delectable mountains bathed in no fading colours, tinted with no departing daylight; green pastures—ever green—where the Good Shepherd leads his sheep; still waters—oh, how tranquil—beside which he gives his flock their ardently desired repose.

And in that happy country, as we shall be equal to the angels, so we shall have angels for our society. Those who know how to thank God for the joys of friendship here on earth, may try to conceive, sometimes, what it shall be, to have angels for companions; those glorious creatures, who, while they excel in strength, and are intellectually more complete than anything we know of genius, or which we attribute to the noblest specimens of our fellow-men, are yet like children in their gentleness and love, and withal so innocent that they need no repentance, entreat no mercy, and understand the darling attribute of God only through their ministry to men. But, if the thought of knowing and loving angels—even those who have served us on earth, who have

been about our bed and about our path—be something more than we can appreciate, let us think of seeing and knowing the saints of every land and time! Think of meeting in those happy seats, not only the patriarchs and prophets; not only the long line of historic saints, such as Clement and Chrysostom and Ambrose; but the tender-hearted St. John, and the rapturous St. Paul, and of recounting to all the evangelists and Apostles, our gratitude for the word of life we have received from them, and which, on earth, are our foretaste of beatitude! Or, is this beyond us? Then let us think of joining, there, the blest society of less ancient worthies. Let us think of meeting such as Taylor, and Ken, and Leighton, and Horne, and Heber, and Henry Martyn. Who, in this base world, does not yearn for such society? infinitely exalted as these sweet souls shall be, above all they ever were on earth; albeit, of some of them, 'tis true that their tongues dropped manna, and their faces shone as it had been the face of an angel. Or if these holy creatures be too far removed from the scenes of our own humble walk with God, for us to imagine what they yet may be to us as familiar friends, who has not lost from his bosom, beloved ones with whom once more to meet and mingle the greet-

ings of a love infinitely refined and elevated, would of itself be heaven? Let the mother remember the sweet babe whose smile was to her as the smile of the cherubim, and "refrain her voice from weeping and her eyes from tears." These too "shall come again from the land of the Enemy." That we shall know each other in a better world, even reason assures us. Alas! to say nothing of those frequent misgivings which mar our earthly friendships, we never can know one another in this world. Here heart never meets heart. There are limits beyond which loving words, and kind looks, and affectionate actions cannot go. We are lonely creatures alike in our heart's bitterness and its joy. But in heaven we shall see each other no more, thus darkly; we shall know and be known, as we are known of God. To suppose any lessening of our knowledge of each other is at variance with the idea of glory. Even Dives in his torment knew Lazarus afar off—yes, and knew father Abraham too, whom on earth he had never seen. So too, at the Transfiguration, that designed prelude of beatitude, St. Peter knew that it was Moses and Elias that appeared and talked with CHRIST. We learn, I think, from such intimations, that our knowledge shall no more de-

pend upon the dull process of learning and remembering: we shall know all things, instinctively, with intuition approaching that which is divine.

But how much is comprehended in the assurance of our blessed Lord, that we shall be with Him where he is. To the believer this expresses all inferior joys: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee!" Christ is himself the joy of his saints. While he was present with men on earth, how did he emparadise those whom he admitted to his company, and those too, who with honest hearts received the words of his preaching? Even to hear him seems to have been a heavenly pleasure. "Never man spake like this man." But Mary, sitting at his feet, in rapt contemplation, furnishes us with a still more striking example of his power to satisfy all that heart and soul can desire. How often were the disciples "glad when they saw the Lord!" And yet the beloved John, who had so often reclined in his bosom, speaks of *seeing him as he is* as the peculiar satisfaction which he expected in heaven. Yes, for here it was the Man of sorrows, whom he had known and so tenderly loved; there, it will be the same

JESUS, in his glory. It will be perpetually the rapture of the Transfiguration; that ecstasy, for which the mortal powers of the Apostles were all too weak; but which, to the ravished Peter, seemed so perfect, that he fain would have detained the Saviour and his saints, upon the mount, in tabernacles, while he cried, in his transport of bliss, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Oh, it will be good indeed to behold that sight in heaven, with nobler faculties of vision, and with souls capable of the full delight which it affords to the angelic choirs! For, in the beatific vision, we shall not only see God, but we shall know him too. This shall be our employment for eternity, and it will be one of which we shall never be weary. What unsatisfied wonder and amazement are professed by men of science who devote their lives to exploring the material heavens, though they see only created things, and that "through a glass, darkly." What then must it be to see the Creator face to face? Let us be sure that it will fill eternity with growing wonder, delight and love. "In a three-fold way," says St. Bernard, "shall we enjoy him in that eternal and perfect beatitude: beholding him in all created things and persons; having him in our-

selves; and—what shall be ineffably sweeter and more blessed than both—knowing the Godhead in essence, and contemplating with eye unquenched, and without a shadow, His glory. For in this shall be life eternal, and life perfect, that we may know the Trinity—Jehovah as he is; that is to say, not as he is in ourselves, or in creation, but as he is in his own self, essentially.” So too, St. Augustine, panting for this accomplishment of all the promises of God, and all the longings of nature, exclaims—“Oh Lord, thou hast formed us for thyself, and restless is our heart till it finds repose in thee!”

Finally, that repose and joy are everlasting, inexhaustible, and doubtless ever increasing as well as ever new. The Father’s house is full of *mansions*; not mere tabernacles, but abiding places; eternal homes. On earth, our most precious things perish in the using; our dearest pleasures become often, by their transitory character, the sources of our keenest sufferings. Oh, the blessedness of that world where change and decay shall no more threaten our chief joys: where no misgivings can intrude upon our satisfactions; and where our inheritance is not only undefiled, but incorruptible, “that fadeth not away!”

And now what have I done? I have failed perhaps, to impart one new idea of heaven. I have felt dissatisfied, as I have spoken: and what I undertook with delight has ended as a task, to which I find myself even more incompetent than I feared. And yet were you ever offered anything better than the things of which I have spoken? Reflect, that this heavenly inheritance is yours already; blood bought and sealed to you in the covenant of your baptism—so that nothing can deprive you of it but your own perverseness: nothing at all, if only you will give diligence to make your calling and election sure!

Are you giving such diligence? Be honest, and ask yourself whether it be possible, that with such a possession at stake, and with eternal hell as the miserable alternative, you are risking all, for the lack of earnestness in the pursuit of immortality? Yes, man of money and of business, count the cost, but be sure you estimate heaven, as you certainly will, if you lose it forever! Put yourself, now, with those who, when the door is shut, shall stand without, crying—“Lord, Lord, open unto us!” Do, now, as they will do then. When the books are closed, and the Book of Life is shut, and the judgment is ended, and

the world begins to pass away in flames, and with a great noise, then shall the wise virgins be bidden to the marriage supper, and enter into the joy of their Lord. A bridal train! A triumphal entry! To them the New Jerusalem shall unfold its gates, as to "fellow-citizens of the Saints, and of the household of God." Who of us shall be there? Who of us shall not be there? Who shall hear *Depart ye cursed* when others are entering the joy of their Lord? Who, in that day, shall be disappointed of his hope? Who shall see heaven, only to be thrust down to hell? Answer—for you need not be deceived. You are as sure to be saved, as you are to be judged, if you are living as a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth, and seeking a better country, even an heavenly. You are as sure to be lost, as you are to die, if, on the contrary, you are living for this present evil world, and refusing to take up your cross daily, and to follow CHRIST. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. . . I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star."

SERMON VI.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

ADVENT EMBER-WEEK, 1855.

THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS TIMES SHALL
COME.—2 Tim. iii. 1.

To observe closely the signs of the times, with reference to the approach of judgment, is one characteristic of intelligent piety. The world is the man beholding his natural face in a glass; a superficial reflection of self is all it sees in times and seasons, and historical events. The child of God has an instinctive perception of something deeper and more important. He realizes the felicity which a heathen poet once eulogized, and knows the causes or prime movements of things; but more than all, he understands their final causes, GOD and the kingdom of his dear Son. In this spirit of watching and praying, even his enemy, the world, ministers to his faith and hope; and

he makes auxiliary to his fixedness of soul, even those temporal things, which to worldly men are commonly the aliment of their unbelief and the source of their perpetual unrest.

The Ember-seasons are special opportunities for cultivating this holy habit of observing the signs of the times. They are not to be restricted to the bare idea, important though it be, of prayer for those about to be ordained. Their object should be generalized; they should be made seasons of prayer for all the ministers of CHRIST, and especially for missionaries, as the noble vanguard of the Christian army. But prayer for the universal spread of the Gospel, implies a devout study of the wants of the world; and so, as I said, it implies an intelligent observation of the signs of the times. Moreover, the Ember-seasons might most advantageously be made the occasion of renewed missionary zeal and interest. They should be the springs of spiritual refreshment and new life; and as they recur from quarter to quarter of the Christian year, they should inspire an unflagging watchfulness, and an ever quickening spirit of prayer for the work of our dear Lord, the great work for which a Christian lives.

The Ember-season in Advent, as it is the

first of the four, suggests these views by its special character, and also justifies them, as in some measure appropriate to the other three. We pray, to-day, for all ministers and stewards of CHRIST'S mysteries, that they may have great success in turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. We pray, also, for all those who are to be called to any holy function in the Church; that is, for those to be ordained on Sunday next, when hundreds will no doubt be admitted to holy orders in all parts of the world. This we do, in close connection with a retrospective view of the ministry, and of the marvellous success of John the Baptist, as the herald of CHRIST'S coming. At the same time, the season of Advent prolongs its more general appeal, crying to us as it were, from hour to hour, "What of the night?" As one of the watchmen of Zion, I bless GOD for such a week of prayer; a week that secures to me some portion of the special intercessions of so many saints. It is a great encouragement amid the especial duties of Advent; when the "burthen of the Lord" is heavy; when a pastor is called to rebuke sloth, and to preach judgment to come; and when, if ever, he is led to watch for souls as one that must give an account, and to feel deeply that

“it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” Oh, that we might be more sure that these blessed ordinances of the Church are faithfully and universally kept! If you would see your pastors men of prayer, and faith, and zeal, help them, brethren, in these appointed ways: remembering that even their noblest efforts for CHRIST must be supported by your faith and charity, or they will be expended in vain. In a late battle, of which you have no doubt read all the particulars, a gallant onset of the British horse, against the Russians, which cost the lives of two out of every three soldiers engaged, was not only desperate from the beginning, but proved worse than useless, for want of infantry to follow up the charge. Even what we gather from the columns of a newspaper may minister to faith, if we will cultivate the habit of watching the signs of the times; and this fact may show us how little our most zealous missionaries and pastors can achieve, as soldiers of CHRIST, unless their bold advances against God’s enemies are followed up, and supported, by the whole force of the people, as the sacramental host to whom our great Captain has entrusted the free course and glory of the cross.

The text is one of the many scriptures

which have always made diligent students of the prophecies close observers of the world. It was addressed to the young bishop of Ephesus, but, as must be apparent from its terms, far less for his sake than for ours, on whom these ends of the world are come. *The last days* is an expression which more concerns us than it could have concerned Timothy; and as time goes on, these messages of the Spirit to the generations which are actually closing up the world's history, will be more and more important. True, the Christian era is called the last time, considered as a whole. It is so called by St. John, and by St. Paul; so also in substance by other Apostles, and our blessed Lord himself. It is the last dispensation, and includes the last periods, or stages, of human history on earth. That primitive epistle, ascribed to Barnabas, allots to the whole history of the world but six thousand years, corresponding to the days of creation; but, be this as it may, if the entire dispensation of CHRIST be the last time, we must reflect that as it already begins to cover one-third of all time, these days of ours must be the very last days; the days when *perilous times* are immediately at hand; if they be not at this moment upon us. It may be well for us to inquire whether any

such signs of CHRIST'S coming begin already to abound.

Observe, then, that the Apostle has not left us in the dark, as to the special characteristics of the final perils of the Church. We learn from the context that a marked feature of the aggression shall be its covert and seductive system of warfare against CHRIST. It shall not be the open enemy, and the pitched battle; not persecution, and avowed hostility to the Cross; but a masked foe; a great army of household poisoners and secret assassins. The enemies of CHRIST shall have a form of godliness in order to destroy its power; they shall creep into houses, and insinuate corruption, by means of society and personal alliances. They shall, moreover, sustain themselves against the remonstrances of men's consciences, by signs and wonders; and as the old Egyptian sorcerers matched the miracles of Moses, they too shall show, within certain limits, sign for sign, against the wonders of the Gospel. Like those ancient workers of iniquity, they shall, indeed, receive a signal check to their crafty ingenuity. "The finger of God" shall be manifest in their final discomfiture; but yet, for a time, their iniquity shall abound, and the peril shall be great. God's written word, CHRIST'S living Church,

these together shall be the only absolute safeguards of the elect. As for those whom sound doctrine does not satisfy; who are not content with the truth as it is in JESUS; it is a fearful thought that "for this cause, GOD shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie." The fall of such shall be, at once, the natural consequence of their unfaithfulness and disloyalty to CHRIST, and also a frightful example of GOD'S retributive justice, which thus at times, even in this world, antedates the judgment.

The progress of the Gospel in the world has been marked by periods, well defined, and passing from one to the other, as the steps of Jacob's ladder mounted towards heaven. Each period brings us nearer to the end; each has its own character, its own peculiar trials, and its definite results. More than twenty years ago, there appeared in England a form of fanaticism, not yet extinct, which attracted much attention at that day. As an example of that kind of watching which I have commended, let me cite some remarks which were made at the time, in private correspondence, by an eminent divine, since departed, to whom England owes much for his services in the cause of Christian education. "If these things be real," says Dr. Ar-

nold, "I take it merely as another sign of the coming of the Lord, that is, of the termination of one of the great ages of the human race; whether the final one of all, or not, I believe no created being knows, or can know." This is a very suggestive remark to any one familiar with the early history of the faith; of its conflict with Judaism; its war with paganism; its stern contest with philosophic morality, that favourite scheme of the apostate Julian; and its successive campaigns against heathenizing heresies; all marking great ages, in which Satan took new forms successively, and tried the faith and patience of the Church, in numerous ways. Each was closed by some new and rapid movement developing the next; and in all, the Church, though triumphant at last, has been forced to feel that indeed, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood."

"The termination of the Jewish age in the first century," continues the writer I have quoted, "and of the Roman age in the fifth and sixth, were each marked by the same concurrence of calamities, wars, tumults, pestilences, earthquakes, and the like, all marking the time of one of God's peculiar seasons of visitation." He adds: "Society in Europe seems going on fast, for a similar revolution, out of which

CHRIST'S Church will emerge in a new position, purified I trust, and strengthened by the destruction of various earthly and evil mixtures that have corrupted it."

Now I cannot but think these remarks are just, and that the new age has been so fairly inaugurated since they were made, as that we may already recognize something of its spirit. The last age was signalized by an assault of unparalleled boldness, upon the existence of the Church. To banish the remembrance of CHRIST from the earth was the professed object of organized and persevering effort, which succeeded, to a great extent, in revolutionizing society, and breaking up old systems. Its result, nevertheless, was signal failure. The Gospel retained its hold upon men's hearts, and more than ever enlisted the homage of reason. Mankind became convinced, by the experiment, that the roots of civilization itself are identical with those of the Gospel. Moreover, in the conflict of wits, the infidel had been worsted in his chosen field. Right reason, as well as revelation, had been found entirely coincident with faith, and fatal to sceptical philosophy. The champions of unbelief experienced an ignominious rout. The Lord seemed to laugh them to scorn. The daughter of Zion shook her

head at them. And lo! the very world disdained them, till their atheism is as unfashionable as the absurdities of their new calendar, or the follies of their personal attire. The result has been a signal advance of the standard of the cross. Not one inch has been surrendered, while new empires have been wrested from paganism, or saved from growing irreligion.

The low watermark of such an age had been fairly covered by the flow of a fresh tide about thirty years ago; but it was considerably later before such observers as I have quoted began to suspect the nature of the new peril. Two things then began to be apparent. It was seen that the brilliant scientific progress of the era had so arrested, and dazzled, the attention of the masses, that science was becoming a sort of religion, in the popular estimation, and especially the speculative developments of science falsely so called. But it was also seen that the Gospel was to be betrayed, by this novel religionism, with a kiss. A form of godliness began to invest everything which could be used to destroy its power. And so, at last, we see Jannes and Jambres resisting the Gospel again, by cunning counterfeits of its divine institutions. What, that is peculiar to the Church of CHRIST, has not the world stolen,

and attributed to itself? What new form of irreligion does not borrow the Christian name, and attire? And behold, they show sign for sign, and oppose miracle with miracle. Sorcery itself appears again with its wonders, and haggard necromancy comes forth from its cavern, with lying oracles; and they vie together, in claiming, for their enchantments, an equality with those sublime and benevolent manifestations of divine power, which accompanied the first advent of our glorious Redeemer.

So, then, these are not only the last days, but the perilous times are come. It will be wise for us to study the Apostolic warnings, and thus forewarned to be forearmed. That the new contest will end in new triumphs of the truth no Christian can doubt: but the fight of faith may first try all souls, and prove fatal to not a few. "Evil men and seducers," says St. Paul, "shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived;" and whereas that great "falling away," which he predicts, has been for ages regarded as peculiarly affecting the See and Church of Rome, I am forced to compare it with her new relations to Christendom, and to regard her present position as, on every account, the most portentous sign of the times. Heretofore, the corruptions, and

enchantments, and lying wonders of Rome, have been poured forth, as from a cup of sorceries, in her left hand; and, until now, we have been able to recognize, in her right hand, that ancient chalice of Salvation, which Apostles committed to her trust. We have gladly seen, moreover, that many souls, whom she had bound in her chains, have scarcely tasted the one, while they drank deeply from the other, and seemed to live and thrive as Christians, in spite of the poison she proffered them as Papists. Thus it is that such lovely children of God as Fenelon and Pascal, while they seemed to be of Rome, and so considered themselves, were yet only Christians and Catholics, whose bondage to the great tyrant of God's heritage was rather their misfortune than their fault. They lived on the right hand cup of the Apostolic Creeds, and not a drop did they swallow from the other, without signs of loathing and disgust. Alas! my brethren, we live to see the day, when both cups are so finally and inextricably mingled, that there seems no longer a cup of salvation in her hand. How God will provide for his few faithful that are left in her, we cannot presume to say: but we can say, and we ought to say, that since Rome was Rome, she never stood so clearly revealed, as

she does, this day, as the great Babylon, whose end is to be destroyed. Heretofore, she has kept her feet on the great foundation of Christ crucified, as the author and finisher of the Faith. I take it for granted, that since Advent Sunday, she has fulfilled her expressed purpose, and taken the final and irrevocable step of apostacy from Christ. If it were not so awful to think of, it might even be amusing, to look at the present position of those, who profess obedience to her, in our own land. They cannot tell, this day, what may or may not be, the entire profession of a Christian. As the world awaits the next steamer, for new fashions from Paris, so these expect to import a new article of belief from Rome. The "faith once delivered to the saints," was incomplete and defective, as understood and preached by St. Paul: it is reserved for the nineteenth century of the Gospel, to discover its true beginning, and to appreciate its fulness! From a throne which surrounds itself with files of bristling bayonets, while it claims the supremacy of a kingdom, "not of this world," goes forth a decree that henceforth all men should believe in Mary, even as they believe in CHRIST. Practically, they are to believe in Mary more than in CHRIST. Of the vast sig-

nificance, and frightful consequences of the new dogma of Mary's immaculate conception, it is impossible to conceive, without mature reflection upon the fundamental truths which it undermines and destroys. So vast and appalling they are, that since the fable was first broached in the days of St. Bernard, and by him indignantly stamped as a lie, Popery itself has shrunk from acknowledging it, even after several hundred years of its practical success. Like a slowly dying man, Rome has heretofore possessed vitality enough, to throw off this last symptom of dissolution. At last, behold the stage of paralysis and of mortification! The gangrene has reached the vitals. She is no longer "able to endure sound doctrine;" she is "turned unto fables." Where now is the Gospel which Rome once knew; and the faith which once was "spoken of throughout the whole world?" The fine analogies of Christian principle; the whole scheme of salvation; the grand fact of "CHRIST alone without sin;" the primary verity of the corruption of all the natural posterity of Adam; and the doctrine of the Incarnation itself, as recognized for ages among all Christians, all are gone from her. And what have they put in the place of this old Gospel? Lo! it is the Gospel of Mary; not the Mary of the

Evangelists, but the Mary of romancers and of painters; a fabulous creation of mediæval art; of Demetrius and his craftsmen, enshrining Maria of the Romans, as the successor, and the counterpart of Diana of the Ephesians.

When Judas left our Lord, with the eleven, the Evangelist adds—"and it was night." Such a night seems just now to be settling on the world. The great dawn, the resurrection, may be near, but oh, it is night, now, for a time! The Church, whose utter apostacy we have lived to behold, was planted by the first witnesses of the Gospel. There St. Paul poured out his doctrine, with his blood; there, at this moment, the precious dust of that glorious Apostle awaits the resurrection. There, too, we may believe that St. Peter closed his labours, and was crucified for the testimony of Jesus, and now sleeps in Him. And yet, "how is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." How many souls will now be finally given over, by her iniquity, to the profession, as well as to the practice, of the grossest idolatry! How many nations must feel the blight of her pestilent breath! What was said of her formerly, by a master-mind of his times, is now more than ever true

of this body of death. "When I contemplate the whole system," said Coleridge, "as it affects the great fundamental principles of morality, the *terra firma* of our humanity; when I trace its operation on the sources, and conditions of national strength, and well-being; and lastly, when I consider its woeful influences on the innocence and sanctity of the female mind and imagination, and on the faith and happiness, the gentle fragrancy, and ever present verdure of domestic life—I can with difficulty avoid applying to it what the Rabbins say of Cain, that "the firm earth trembled wherever he strode, and the grass turned black beneath his feet."

Yes, brethren, when I see Christ himself, as it were, putting out the candle of such a Church, I cannot but feel that it is an awful sign of the times. I cannot account for this tremendous downfall, in view of its past history, on any ordinary principles. When I reflect on its probable consequences to the millions of souls who wear the yoke of the papacy; on the encouragement which such treachery to Christ must afford to all who seek occasion of cavil against the Gospel; or on the many impostures for which this new Gospel will furnish a precedent, in a day so fertile in inven-

tions against the truth, I must feel that these are the perilous times of the text. An angel seems to have sounded in the heavens, saying to the unclean spirit of the age, "This is your hour and the power of darkness."

In our own country we seem to be walking like Christian in the allegory, between Pope and Pagan; between the imported superstition of the old world, and the indigenous heathenism of the new. There are signs which may well lead us to fear, that America is to be the field of many severe engagements, if not of a general war with Anti-Christ. The enterprize and enthusiasm of our times, in alliance with the wide diffusion of a certain modicum of un-sanctified knowledge among us, is developing in the vulgar intellect, a strange tendency to gross superstition. It is a tendency, at once ingenious and base, inventive and vile, keenly sceptical, yet mechanically credulous. It is sordid, sensual and grovelling, yet hardy, active, heroic and efficient. To what does it tend? I think, to some enormous perversion of Christianity; as utterly hostile to CHRIST as Paganism itself, yet professing his name, and borrowing many of his institutions, if not his sacraments. I have quoted one pious watcher, with reference more especially to Europe; let me

cite another who closely observed the portents of his day, with reference to America. At about the same time, the late Dr. Southey wrote as follows:—"America is in danger from fanaticism. The government not thinking it necessary to provide religious instruction in any of the new States, the prevalence of superstition, and that, perhaps, in some wild and terrible shape, may be looked for as one likely consequence of this great and portentous omission. Fanaticism is the most effective weapon with which ambition can arm itself, and the way for both is prepared by that immorality which the want of religion naturally and necessarily induces; and camp-meetings may be very well directed to forward the designs of a *military prophet*. Were there another Mohammed to arise, there is no part of the world where he would find more scope, or a fairer opportunity, than in that part of the Anglo-American Union into which the older States continually discharge the restless part of their population, leaving laws and Gospel to overtake it if they can; for in the march of modern colonization, both are left behind."

These prophetic words might then have been laughed to scorn: but while they were yet wet from the pen, an obscure and illiterate indi-

vidual, in our great West, was busily forging the abominable "Book of Mormon," which, fourteen months later, he foisted into the world, allying himself with the inorganic Christianity of popular religionism, precisely as Southey had predicted. He lived to distinguish himself as a military prophet, and to inaugurate a new Mohammedanism : and while we have been sleeping, this cloud like a man's hand, has become an appalling darkness in our western horizon, overcharged with elements of evil. It is a fanaticism at once wicked and warlike. It has assumed a territorial and civil, as well as an ecclesiastical character. It has founded its temple and its capital, and set up its seraglios. Like a new Sodom, it invests that great Dead Sea in our central wilderness, and there aspires to the character of a sovereign State. It is already recognized by our federal government, and lifts its brazen front in our Legislature ; while, under the shadow of our laws, it outrages our most sacred social sentiments, and sets at nought the decencies of civilization ; nay, threatens with fire and sword, any exemplar of purer morality that may pitch its tent too near. The issue who can foresee ? May God avert what threatens !

The evil is one which our national constitu-

tion could not prevent ; and for which possibly, it may find no remedy.

But might not this gigantic danger have been prevented, if the Church of CHRIST had been alive to her responsibilities?

Even now, may it not be mastered if her sons can be roused to the great duty which she owes to the West? Alas! what miseries our children must live to behold, if a new spirit cannot be breathed into the dry bones of this generation!

And my brethren, 'tis our own Apostolic Church that must act, if ever system and order, and organic life, are to be superinduced on the irregular and unnatural varieties of good, which are all that popular religion can effect. Not that I undervalue the noble efforts of Christians, from whom we grieve to be separated, and with whom we would delightedly act, had we not a great deposit in reserve, which it is our mission to keep, and which they do not yet understand. With us is the Ark of the Covenant, which, even now, blesses the whole land, while it dwells in curtains, waiting for the day when the good and the faithful shall, everywhere, shout to behold it. With all our unworthiness, let us know the good thing committed to our trust! Much,

every way, is our advantage. We keep the faith. We guard the great system of primitive truth. We hold in readiness, for a better day, the light that is to lighten the Gentiles. To it the good and faithful must turn, at the last, when creedless religions have spent their strength, and when the need of unity, and the want of "a form of doctrine," shall be generally felt by all who love the Lord Jesus. Ours then will prove the reward, if we do our own work with patience now, to reap the fields, which others sow, and to bind the sheaves at last for the Master's garner.

Oh! that the Lord would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," and make all his people in this land, to be of one heart, and one mind, "striving together for the faith of the Gospel." Oh! that our countrymen might learn what a refuge and resource they have, from the evils which distract and disgrace our Christianity, in the Apostolic institutions they now undervalue and neglect! But, above all, oh! that the Church might shake herself from the dust, and rise to the measure of her abilities and of her duties! Shame on our worldliness, and our sloth! Shame on our unsanctified wealth, and our unemployed luxuriance of

power! Are these perilous times the times for slumber? Wo! to the slothful servant who buries his talents in the earth. Alas! Satan is always active. Everywhere iniquity abounds. Good men are faint of heart, and life itself becomes a burthen to them, because of the evils they cannot cure. But, thanks be to God, there is still left the consolation of prayer; and they who are alive to their privileges as Churchmen, know how precious is this great resource, at such a season as this, when our dear Mother calls us to watch and to pray, all together, and with one accord. There is a peace in her blessed communion, which the world can neither give nor take away. Enter then, into your closets, and shut to the doors, and plead with God, for the Church and for the world. It is the bride of CHRIST that calls us. Behold how she looks out at the window, and cries through the lattice, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"

SERMON VII.

SPIRITUAL REJOICING.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

MERCY AND TRUTH ARE MET TOGETHER; RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE HAVE KISSED EACH OTHER.—Ps. lxxxv. 10.

As the evening and the morning were the first day, at creation, so in the new creation, we seem naturally to begin our holy-day with its eve. It was in the night that the tidings of great joy were first announced to men; and he whose heart is awake to the delightful spirit of "this feast that cometh," will not be slow to antedate its blessings, by hallowing even the hours which immediately precede it, and which more effectually renew to his devout imagination the anthem of the angels, the light that shone round about the shepherds, and the amazing sight of the new-born King, "wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger.

Fragrant indeed are the memories of this festival, beyond the sweetness of the living green which adorns these courts of the Lord's house, and which seems to realize the promise that "all the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord." Welcome these refreshing emblems of a reviving Eden; welcome these tokens of a joy like the joy of harvest; welcome these rejoicings "as men rejoice when they divide the spoil!" To-night, let us be willing to become as little children, in the simplicity of our love to the Holy Child of Bethlehem. We would not argue with scribes; nor dispute with doctors. For once, let our hearts have way! It may be that Jesus was not born on the twenty-fifth of December. It may be that the decorations of our temples might have been sold for an hundred-pence, and given to the poor. But who shall forbid us to rejoice in a Redeemer, at this set time, which the holy Church throughout all the world has agreed to hallow? Who shall scowl because we are happy? Who shall object, if even "the glory of Lebanon shall come unto us, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of the sanctuary?"

It is an important fact that the human heart is so created that it responds, instinctively, and

with exultation, to the idea of the Incarnation. Of this, proof enough can be gathered from the confessions of Infidels, and the spontaneous outbursts of nature which exist even in the writings of heathen. The Incarnate God was, and is, the Desire of Nations; and though some, who call themselves Christians, have professed to see no such GOD in revelation, I make no doubt I can satisfy a reasonable man, from the nature of man himself, that nothing less can meet our necessities, or sufficiently assure us of the love of GOD to his creatures. When I see death preying on GOD's creation, how can I be sure that our Maker is a Father and pitieth his children? But when I see GOD himself consenting to be made flesh, to suffer and to die, what more can I require to convince me that he loves the world? "Herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The text derives its significancy, as part of revelation, from those other Scriptures which assert, doctrinally, or historically, what its poetical form is adapted to celebrate liturgically. It has little meaning save as we believe that He who is "very GOD of very GOD came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy

Ghost, of the Virgin Mary." It requires us, also, to believe that this was done, "for us men, and for our salvation." For it celebrates a reconciliation between Mercy and Truth, and between Righteousness and Peace. So then, these attributes of GOD were once at issue with respect to men. How has Justice been satisfied, how has Truth been honoured, if indeed they have shared embraces, and kisses, with Mercy and Peace? We know from the song of angels, that peace and good-will came down to earth in CHRIST. We know that He came to "save his people from their sins." We know that he "bore our sins, in his own body on the tree," and that he died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to GOD." Nay, we have it in express words that, whereas all have sinned, so GOD hath "set forth CHRIST to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in JESUS."

It is, therefore, according to this testimony of JESUS that we interpret the prophecy. His incarnation and atonement give meaning, and give rapture too, to the inspiration of the text. The Word is made flesh that he may satisfy eternal justice, and make us the subjects of mercy: that he may vindicate his truth, and

yet establish for us peace with our Maker. Who then that is taught the Gospel, can fail to interpret the psalm? It will be a fitting preparation for the morrow to dwell for a time on its rich and suggestive meanings, as thus connected with the great subject of our festivity.

There was a time when every attribute of God was at peace with his creature man : when the Lord rejoiced in all his works of creation, and pronounced them very good. Oh, what infinite harmonies were disturbed by the fall! When the guilty pair fled from His presence, and knew that they were naked, what a history of discords, and collisions, of woes and miseries, of pains, diseases, and deaths, began with that confession of their guilt and shame! I am able to imagine that the evil which had been wrought by the man and his wife, in their common crime, was one of a magnitude not to be expressed in words. Its consequences prove that it shook the Universe ; and in the consequences which the Son of God himself was pleased to share, and to suffer, in the flesh, we have our strongest warrant for believing that the fall of man was an event of unspeakable import to Heaven, and to the powers of darkness, as well as to the Earth, and its inhabitants. Such sinners we are at best, that we may well doubt

our ability to estimate the nature of sin, and its character in the sight of a holy God. Alas ! we live, in this fallen world, as it were on the borders of hell ; and iniquity and misery become so familiar to us, that we can even be merry amid scenes that make angels weep. “ Fools make a mock at sin ;” and thousands, who are not fools, except in this, live on, in sin, with little thought of their desperate disease ; with only a vague idea that they are infected with the leprosy which shocks them when they see it in others ; and with no conception at all, of the woe and misery they themselves are propagating among mankind, every day that they survive, impenitent and unforgiven. No wonder then, if we fail to perceive why the sin of Adam and Eve wrought so immediate, and so ruinous a result. Nor need we know more than the fact that it did so work. Enough that it spoiled Eden, and blasted the whole creation, and reduced the glorious creature who was so lately perfect and entire, the image and likeness of his Maker, to the condition of a poor mortal wretch, unable to look up to God, and hiding from His presence, in conscious degradation. God was merciful, but He was truthful too : and He had promised that, in such a day, the culprit should surely die. Here

Mercy and Truth were forced to part—for Truth required Justice now. And so, GOD was the GOD of Peace; but His righteousness was now invoked to war. His sword had been defied, and it was time that He should arise to judgment, and avenge His broken Law. So Righteousness and Peace were at issue. How should He show Mercy and yet keep Truth? How should He be just, and yet justify the sinner?

I know that men have a way of suggesting, here, that GOD might have overlooked the transgression, and acted as if it had not been. Such a suggestion impeaches infinite wisdom and infinite goodness, and is based on the awful arrogance of an attempt to judge our Judge, and that with finite powers, and with little knowledge of ourselves, and less of Him. The answer is that GOD knew what was best to be done, and what His own attributes and relations required. In doing what He actually did, He taught us to be dumb, however, and to own His goodness as well as His justice, since whatever the consequence may be to guilty man, "He himself took part in the same."

The problem was to reconcile Mercy with Truth, and Righteousness with Peace. Men admit unreal explanations, and make false

compromises, when interest seems to invite them. We are, therefore, too easily led to suppose that this settlement might have been arbitrarily made, and that there was no necessity of satisfying the attributes of God with corresponding exactions. But all important is the lesson we are taught, concerning the divine character, when we observe how absolutely He is just as well as merciful, and how impossible it is for God to lie, even in order to make peace. "God is not a man that He should repent." What confidence should we possess, at this moment, notwithstanding His promises, in any ordinance of God, had He permitted His first and only law to be broken with impunity, or had He forgiven, without satisfaction to His justice? Or what in such a case would be our actual ideas of sin?

In point of fact, the very moment of the fall demonstrated the existence of some mysterious interposition, securing mercy to man, and sustaining the honour of God. In the day they had eaten they became mortal, but they did not immediately die, and hope was inspired in the very words which denounced the curse. The seed of the woman should "bruise the serpent's head." So the Gospel of Christ began. An invisible power was already operating, in

behalf of man. The thorns and thistles that sprang up in his path, were not unmingled with flowers and fruit, and the sweat of the sinner's brow was relieved, one day in seven, by the Sabbath that survived the fall. In spite of the flaming sword, a way back to paradise was opened from the beginning: for man had no sooner sinned, than an atonement was provided, and all things began to disclose a second Adam, and the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world." As astronomers have been able to foreknow an undiscovered planet, by feeling its influences, so to speak, among the orbs with which they were familiar, so, from this moment, He who is the bright and the Morning Star, began to be felt, in the great system of the Universe, and all signs, and all prophecies, began to point to his appearing, as the Dayspring from on high.

But who, and what, should he be on whom the hopes of the world were already dependent? She who had been the first victim of the Tempter was consoled with the promise that she should be the instrument of bringing into the world the Strong Deliverer, who should bruise the head of her enemy. The pangs of her special curse were thus alleviated; and when her first child appeared, she delight-

edly exclaimed, "I have gotten the Man from the Lord," imagining that this was the promised seed, though alas! it was only Cain—the first murderer, and the first unbeliever, the fruit of her sorrow and her sin. Who the Man should be, and "how he should be able to deliver his brother and to make agreement unto GOD for him," was a problem of which the Lord allowed successive generations to feel all the difficulty, before He began to disclose the King in his beauty, and to reveal, little by little, His stupendous plan of mercy to mankind. It was not for man to conceive it; nor could mere man accomplish it. None less than GOD could be the Finisher, as GOD alone could be the Author of our faith.

Among the many prophecies by which GOD made clearer and clearer the great mystery which had been "kept secret from the foundation of the world," until it was at last made manifest in JESUS, the psalm of which the text is part, is not the least luminous and inspiring. The object of prophecy was, little by little, to prepare men's hearts to receive the Saviour; and by the wise counsel of GOD, these prophecies were delivered in all forms most likely to command attention, and to gain a lodging in the mind and soul. By a dark saying, first of

all, concerning the seed of the woman; and then by signs and by seasons; by figures and parables; by types and shadows; by prosaic argument, and poetical rhapsody; in all these ways, and by others not classed with any of them, did the Lord God reveal the Desire of Nations, and give promise of His appearing. The prophetic psalm commanding attention, inspiring the affections, and imbuing the memory, was often a concentration of all these modes; and it is so in the instance before us. A condensed argument is the very essence of the text. It implies all I have said of the attributes of God, and involves both the history of their disturbance, and the promise of their reconciliation. It seems also to explain the sacrifices, the feasts, the signs, the emblems, and all the ritual and scriptural revelations which the pious Hebrew studied, but only half comprehended. But chiefly it calls up to remembrance, that most holy of all the Jewish symbols, the Ark of the Covenant, with its mercy-seat, and its cherubim, and that abiding brightness, or Shekinah, that covered it. The Ark was a coffer, or chest of gold, and was wrought on purpose to make memorable the Covenant; that is to say, the promise of salvation, through One who should mediate between

God and man, reconciling Mercy and Truth, and Righteousness and Peace. Its lid was of beaten gold, and was called the abode of reconciliation, the propitiatory, or the mercy-seat; and the glory of the Lord was ever present upon it; while, above it, the cherubim joined their wings, "shadowing the mercy seat," and looking down, in wonder and adoration. The Ark itself, implied the human nature, and the glory resting upon it, the divine nature, which were to be united in CHRIST, and which were concerned in the covenant of a Saviour; while the angels bending over it, implied that the Son of God was to be a little lower than the angels; was to be seen of angels, as he dwelt on earth; was to be made man, and, as man, to work our redemption. Thus were presignified also the amazement, and the love of angels; the astonishment and the adoration of heaven; the mute rapture, and absorbing worship, with which the powers of GOD's highest courts bent down and gazed upon the Incarnation. Now all this, that was so richly symbolized in the fabric of that mysterious Ark, was said in words, less figurative, in this golden psalm. *Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other: "Truth shall flourish*

out of the earth, and Righteousness hath looked down from heaven.”

Thus was the Jew, and through him the world, made to perceive and know the nature of the mercy which had interposed, at the fall of man: that is to say, the nature of that second Adam who should bruise the serpent's head. He should be perfect GOD, and perfect man: He should be made lower than the angels, for man's salvation; He should be the mercy seat, and peace on earth. Truth and Righteousness looking down on Him should be well pleased; and being well pleased with Him, should at the same time, accept all of the human race who should be joined to Him. And to express this perfect reconcilment of earth and heaven, this blest renewal of harmony between men and angels, in the Incarnate GOD, it is to be noticed that the cherubim, who stood upon the Ark, and overshadowed the mercy seat, were by the special command of God, made part of it; not screwed upon it, but inwrought with it, so that all was *one piece*, expressing one perfect system, a system embracing heaven above and the earth beneath. No wonder that the accomplishment of such a pledge was celebrated by the morning stars, with a renewal of their Sabbath-song over the finished creation.

Again, at the Nativity, the sons of God shouted for joy, saying, "Glory to God in the highest." Angels and men were reunited in Messiah. In short JESUS CHRIST was the spirit of all this prophecy. His Incarnation, for us men and for our salvation, had filled the successive ages with signs of its approach. Of Him, all things had said beforehand, what the Apostle recorded as history, when all prophecy was made good in CHRIST, "God was manifest in the flesh, seen of angels." Yes, my brethren, search the Scriptures, for they testify of Him; and the prophets and the psalms derive their meaning only as we see in them the prospective truth "that the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Our rejoicings before the Lord, at this time, attest our faith that all has been fulfilled, as was promised, and that He who was born of woman has bruised the serpent's head, and is the second Adam, and the Lord from heaven. How delightful to behold the expectation of four thousand years, realized at last, in the Babe of Bethlehem. This is He whom prophets and kings have desired to see, and on whom they have showered the fragrance of their

hearts, in words of desire and love. Here is Noah's Rainbow, and Abraham's Provided Lamb: the Shiloh of Jacob, and the Rock of Moses. Here is the true Manna, and the Ark of the Covenant. Here is the Son of David, and Solomon's Rose of Sharon. Here is He who is Isaiah's only theme; his Immanuel, and his Man of Sorrows; the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! Yes, He who comprehends all these titles, and fulfils alike their humiliation and their glory, behold Him "wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

Thus then the footstool and the throne are united in this Bow of Promise, and the heavens and the earth have come together, in this embrace of Mercy and Truth. Well may the hill country of Judea be illuminated with heavenly light, while mortal ears hear once again the music of the skies! Well may a new star be seen by the eastern watchers, hovering like the pillar of fire, over the place where the young child lies. There is the true mercy seat; and all the angels of God bend in rapture over that scene in the manger, because there is displayed, at last, all that has been hidden so long. There is the only-begotten of the Father, "the end of the law

for righteousness;” perfect man to suffer and to die for sinners, and so to magnify the Law, and to establish the truth; and perfect God, that His merits may make our peace, and secure mercy to all who come to him by faith: yes, one CHRIST, both GOD and man, in whom *Mercy and Truth have met together: Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.*

But we must not dismiss this great subject, without the earnest reflection, that it is not enough to behold, in CHRIST, the world’s Redeemer, without appropriating Him, as one’s own Redeemer. Say not only “behold the Saviour,” but also “behold *my* Saviour:” and remember that He as really comes to you personally, as if there were none else to be sought and saved. You are lost, by nature, and Adam’s sin is but a token of your own innumerable transgressions. If Adam had not fallen, GOD had never been incarnate; but reflect that your sins as much require the atonement as the primal guilt of your first-parents. Let us bring home the truth, that our own personal guilt is as really abhorrent to our Maker as was that of Adam, and possibly, is not much less in its true character. We, indeed, are conceived in sin, but then we are sanctified in baptism, and we have grown up, strengthened

by grace, and enlightened by the Scriptures. What an enormity is a Christian's transgression! Who but God can know its consequences, or understand its relations? I must not only try and examine myself by the searching law of God, but I must estimate my sins by the woe and misery which sin has brought into the universe, and by the sacrifice which has been required to atone for it, and to regenerate the soul. The true believer does not curse his father Adam for the ills which he beholds and feels. Alike when he suffers in person, or when he groans over the wretchedness of the world, or when he smites his breast in view of the cross and its marvellous victim, he feels and says: "*my sin*—the sin of which I am so great an accessory—yes, I have done this." This is the faith that is necessary to true rejoicing in CHRIST. It is faith with which love is mingled in due proportion. It comes not to gaze on the Saviour, and to welcome Him with words to the world; but, oh! it "kisses the Son;" it bathes His feet with tears; and, though there be no room for Him in the inn, it receives Him into the heart, and there appropriates His salvation, as if one's own sin were the cause of His humiliation; as if one's

own love and gratitude were to be his sole reward.

Such is the faith which alone suffices to sanctify this holy time, and to make it acceptable to the new-born Immanuel. Oh how comprehensive is the believer's view of his Saviour; how utterly blind is the carnal eyesight to the real glories of His presence! If you have not yet learned to rejoice in Him as your own Saviour, alas! "ye worship ye know not what," and the "Day-star" has not yet risen in your hearts. True love embraces Him, meanwhile, in all His fulness, for self and for the whole dying world besides. It sees in Him at once, the joy of the whole earth, and her own Beloved. Nor does it see Him less clearly as a priest, than as a king. Even on His birthday we celebrate His death, in the Eucharist. It is because of this harmony of all truth in Christ. He is, at the same moment, the Ancient of days, and the Holy Child; the Lion of Judah, and the Lamb of God; the Darling of the Virgin's bosom, and the agonizing Victim of the cross; the scorn of man, and the well-beloved of the Father. The whole Gospel is bound up in Him; and as we gain the Pisgah of true faith, all the land of the Incarnation opens in one view, from Bethlehem to Galilee,

and from Tabor to Calvary. The same lights and shadows invest the manger and the cross; and Jesus, in the midst of all, is the abiding glory; always transfigured before us; the same in the swaddling clothes, or in the purple robe, as upon the holy mount; and viewed already, while He lies in the manger, as marred more than the sons of men, and lying in the tomb. The Incarnation and the Atonement must blend in every true conception of the Messiah; and myrrh must mingle with frankincense, in every tribute which is offered Him, out of the treasures of the heart.

It is good then to keep the feast of the Nativity; to rejoice before the Lord, and to be glad in Him with psalms. It is good to enter His courts with praise, and to make home bright with the same glory of the Lord which shines in His sanctuary. The blessed influences of this holy season are such as sweeten life and freshen domestic piety, and quicken the pulses of human sympathy toward the poor and needy. They draw man to man as brother to brother, and impress society with the sanctifying conviction, that, after all, it is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, that can answer the wants of mankind. The institution is civilizing, harmonizing, Christianizing. It is

wanted in this work-day world, and nothing else could possibly fill its place. But not on these low grounds am I content to commend it to your devout observance, for he who keeps it only on such grounds, may be a man of feeling and of taste, but he cannot be a Christian. It is only in the comprehensiveness of its character, as I have endeavoured to unfold it, and because of its grand substance, as CHRIST and Him crucified, that it is worthy of a believer's regard. It presents to him the faith by which he lives, all the year: but its peculiar attraction is that it freshens his sight, and regales his heart, with those views of Christ and his Gospel, which are sweetest, and most cheerful; which while they do not displace the crown of thorns, exhibit Him in His diadem of beauty; and which, while they demand repentance, enkindle love more sensibly, and draw out the soul with less of a conscious struggle against sin, than of delight and joy in GOD. When a Christmas is so kept as to answer this high spiritual end, then it is that its value is perceived, and CHRIST is glorified by its observance. Oh, then, so long as your Christmas lasts, let your heart be as contrite, as your tongue is musical with joy! If you call Him your Saviour, let Him save you. If you wel-

come Him as the world's salvation, fail not to receive Him yourself, as your strength and your Redeemer.

And now, unto Him who is worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power; to the only wise God our Saviour, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth, and forever. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

THE ROYALTIES OF CHRIST

CHRISTMAS DAY.

THOU ART FAIRER THAN THE CHILDREN OF MEN; FULL OF GRACE
ARE THY LIPS, BECAUSE GOD HATH BLESSED THEE, FOREVER.
—Ps. xlv. 3.

To the holy Babe in the manger we address this salutation as to Him in whom its prophetic words are fulfilled. First, to Him let all our hearts be turned, as to the Dayspring from on high; and then let us greet one another with warm congratulations on the return of this festival of peace and good-will. It is the spirit of the feast to renew the universal brotherhood of man; and especially to diffuse through the family of CHRIST, the vital warmth of charity. The genial delights of Christmas overflow our private homes. Wherever the blessed name of Jesus is heard, it quickens a tender sympathy among all believers, and eye kindles to eye,
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and heart throbs with heart, as we wish well to one another in the name of the Lord. Oh that every human heart might rejoice in Him! Oh that every ransomed soul might keep, with us, this feast of charity, in spirit and in truth!

Come then, my brethren, let us leave the world without, and enter in, and keep this day with the Babe of Bethlehem, and with Mary and the shepherds, praising and blessing GOD. Here is no abstraction presented to our faith; no dogma of the schools; but that which our eyes may see, and our hands handle of the Word of life. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." This day becomes to the believer, an element in his Christian life: it introduces him, personally, to His Redeemer: it reproduces, and enables him to live in, the days of the Son of Man: and drawing him by ties of love, it entwines his affections with his faith, and binds his ardent hope, as by the cords of a man, to the Desire of all Nations—GOD manifest in the flesh.

The psalm of which the text is part is styled a "song of loves." It is, in its highest sense, the language of GOD the Father to His well-beloved Son; and as such, the spouse of CHRIST sets it apart for her royal bridegroom, as especially suited to the solemnities of this Feast

of Love. She sees Him, as He is; and though the world has refused to recognize the glorious stranger, and has thrust Him from the Inn, she comes like those Eastern Sages, who beheld his Star, bringing this box of very precious ointment, that she may break it on the head of the Holy Child. She knows her king: she greets her God. This helpless infant, she worships by His name Jehovah: this despised outcast, she invests with titles of majesty and adoration; she sheds on Him all the fragrance of her affection, as she sings her song of loves, and assures herself that He is indeed the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. In following this tide of rapture as it gushes from her heart, it is delightful to be borne along with it, in all that fulness of confidence, with which she entrusts herself to Him, as her strong deliverer, and reposes on His arm, as mighty to save. Babe as He is, she sees, in His hand, the key of David, and the government upon His shoulder. She beholds Him, already as the Captain of salvation, and from the beginning of the Gospel, forecasts its triumph, to the end. "Gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh, oh thou most Mighty, according to thy worship and renown." So she exults in the sure kingdom of her Saviour. She knows,

indeed, that against this holy child, kings shall stand up, and rulers take counsel together; but she knows too, that He is stronger than they: and, therefore, she makes the very manger resound with the alleluias that encircle the throne, and greets Him beforehand, as a Conqueror—as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

It is well enough to remember that this psalm had its type and shadow, in the relations of Solomon to David; but, who can hear its sublimer strains, without feeling that Inspiration has so elevated this magnificent ode, above the symbolical incidents which served as its occasion, that one must constantly exclaim, “a greater than Solomon is here?” Faith changes the scene from the earthly to the heavenly Zion, and infinitely enlarges the scale. “Thy throne, oh God, is forever and ever:” to what Solomon can this belong, save the Prince of Peace himself, to whom it is ascribed by St. Paul? And so the text; whose glorious person can it describe, save that of the great Melchizedek; the king in his beauty? It is CHRIST’S alone by every right, and token; by all those endearing graces that make up “the fair beauty of the Lord,” in the eyes of His adoring Church! He is “the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley,” therefore, to Him

alone belongs the eulogy, "thou art fairer than the children of men." The testimony of His foes concerning Him, is that "never man spake like this man;" "they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth." To Him, therefore, we sing "full of grace are thy lips." And when the psalm continues, because "GOD hath blessed thee forever"—we address it only to Him, to whom the Father hath given all His power; and who ascends the chariot of His sure victory, with this salutation from the heavens—"ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness and of righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

The text, then, exhibits JESUS and His Gospel, and that in all the splendour of His real character, as He manifests himself to His children, and not unto the world. First, the divine person—"Thou art fairer than the children of men." Next, the message of redemption—"full of grace are thy lips." Finally, we behold the perpetuity and blessedness of the everlasting Gospel in the ejaculation—"because GOD hath blessed thee forever." While we dwell, for a moment, on these delightful themes, may the Holy Spirit of knowledge and understanding enable us to lift up

our hearts to the measure of our privileges, that we may be filled with the love of CHRIST.

Those who have debated concerning the human appearance of our blessed Lord, have often cited the text, in justification of the fancy that His form and features were of surpassing comeliness. But, although a speculative argument might, perhaps, be sustained in support of such a secondary conception of the psalmist, we have higher warrant for understanding these expressions, as we do many similar eulogies in the Canticles, as referring primarily, to the everlasting Word, in the original splendorus of His person, before the Incarnation. It seems congruous indeed, with what we know of the loveliness and attractions of the holy child, to suppose that the features of His humanity were such as helped to win favour with men, as we feel sure that they must have been full of that heavenly expression which attested the favour of GOD. And yet, so soon as He began to work the work of His Father, and to testify of men that their works are wicked, He began to be the Man of sorrows, on whose brow the labours of redemption plowed deep furrows, and from whose cheek they wore away the hues of youth before His prime. The Jews said to Him, when

He was little more than thirty, "Thou art not yet *fifty* years old," and they seem to have looked impudently into His face, and closely estimated His years, by His appearance. It was not long before "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men;" and we are sure from the identifying tokens prescribed by prophecy, that He had no form nor comeliness, and that, when they saw Him, He had no beauty that they should desire Him. He was worn with the griefs He had borne for others, and men hid their faces from Him, as one smitten of God, and afflicted. Whatever may have been His infantile beauty, He had grown up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He who giveth to all their food, had withered in His flesh, for lack of nourishment; His fare had been scanty, and He had been often without a place to lay His head. And the touching language of the prophet goes on to intimate, that though His beauty was thus worn away, like that of some delicate and unwatered flower, because He had loaded Himself with our sorrows, and taken our chastisements upon Him, He was supposed, meanwhile, to be smitten for some fault of His own. God had "put Him to grief"—He was a man stricken for His own

ill-deserts; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. So much then is ascertained, that the tokens of His Messiahship were the reverse of attractive. No halo, like that with which painters encircle Him, was visible to the Jews; and we know, with moral certainty, that there was nothing in the Son of David to give any fictitious currency to His claims, as the promised Shiloh, to whom belonged the sceptre of Judah. On the contrary, His reputed parentage gets Him the name of the carpenter's son; His early home fastens upon Him the opprobrious epithet of the Nazarene; the objects of His mercy become a cause of reproach to Him the friend of publicans and sinners; His chosen disciples are made an objection to His pretensions, as compared with the Pharisees and rulers, who refuse to acknowledge, what those illiterate fishermen, and Galileans, alone appear to espouse; and when Herod clothes Him in a gorgeous robe, the point of the mockery seems to consist in the utter contrast presented by His meek and suffering exterior, to that divinity of kings, which resides in a proud bearing, and a well-favoured person. Herod, therefore, with his men of war, set Him at nought: they scorn such a wearer of imperial purple, and finish their inventions of

contempt, by completing His regalia, with the sceptre of reed, and the crown of thorns. "Behold the man." To faith, He is as glorious, as to unbelief, He is the very scorn of men. Yes, these are His attractions; these His chief glories! This is He who is "fairer than the children of men," and never more so than at such a time. This is He who, down to the very dust of death, and even when laid in the sepulchre, full of wounds and bruises, draws after Him the love of women, and the strongest devotion of men like Nicodemus and Joseph. Their anointed prophet, their anointed priest, their anointed king: "because of the savour of His good ointments, His name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Him."

But the love with which they loved Him was, indeed, refined and sublimated, as it was intensely strong, and such was its nature that the same love has been the constraining principle of life to millions, who never saw Him in the flesh, though it has not less inspired them to follow Him gladly, to prison and to death. Indeed, I trust I now speak to some, at least, who can say of themselves, "the love of CHRIST constraineth us," and again, "who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST?"

Let them suggest, then, the true interpretation of the text. You have, perhaps, husband, or wife, or sister, or brother, or beloved child, who is dearer to you than all the world besides, and yet, is there not one dearer than even these, because He is *fairer than the children of men*? Is there not a friend "closer than a brother?" Is there not one for whom all earthly ties should be sacrificed, and would be sacrificed, rather than to forego His love? What then is this fair beauty of the Lord, which His children behold so clearly, by faith, and by which they are so enchained to His service? What but that moral beauty of the Holy One; those divine perfections of the Creator, to which all beauty of the creature is as a fading flower? Even so, because in JESUS we behold set forth bodily, all the fulness of the Godhead. The divine attributes, in their essence, dwell in Him. He is goodness, He is mercy, He is love; as well as wisdom and truth and righteousness: yea, and we love Him also with a divine faculty of love, because, as soon as we receive Him, He gives us power to become the sons of God, and in some degree, His moral image is reproduced in us. Thus CHRIST manifests, and declares to us, the Father; and what He beholds in us His children,

the Father beholds in Him, and is well-pleased. All which is in the Father is in the Son: and therefore when the Son of God stoops to become the Son of Man, the Father proclaims Him *fairer than the children of men*; for though found in fashion as a man, and in form as a servant, He is “the express image of the Father’s person and the brightness of His glory.”

Such then is CHRIST. His Gospel, and His essential character as the Word of GOD, are both eulogized in the expression, *full of grace are thy lips*. I have already directed attention to the testimony of even His enemies, as to the persuasiveness of His personal preaching: but the text applies, as truly, to the character of His Gospel as it comes to us in the Scriptures, and by the ministry of His Church. In the Gospel for this day we are taught that He who, in time, was born of Mary, had an eternal generation before the world began, and that He who was named JESUS by an angel, was named, eternally, the Word of GOD. Now, the psalm which contains the text, is quoted by St. Paul, in the epistle appointed for this feast, as referring to the same eternal Word, and is expounded, by an ancient father, on this principle; so that he renders the opening sentence, according to a

criticism which the Jews themselves allowed, "my heart hath generated a blessed Word." It is, as I have said before, in one of its aspects, the language of the Father to His well-beloved Son, in prospect of His Incarnation. He who is addressed is the same "by whom, also, He made the worlds;" for, in the Blessed Trinity, the Word is the person who "spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast." So too, as the Word, it His is office to declare or manifest the Father to mankind, and He becomes the medium by which the world knows GOD, and is made to see Him, and to love Him. Now if men had never seen GOD manifest in the flesh, He might have been worshipped as the well-beloved of the Father, in the expression, *thou art fairer than the children of men*; yet who does not see that it would have been a feeble eulogy, and that its point is its plain reference to His Incarnation! So too, *full of grace are his lips*, as the eternal Word; but how much more expressive the homage, when uttered in view of His manifesting heaven to earth, and reconciling sinners unto God! It must be regarded, therefore, as addressed to the everlasting Word, as the author of the everlasting Gospel; and whether that Gospel comes to the sinner from CHRIST himself, or

from His Apostles, or from those whom Apostles sent, He is the great preacher, and to Him alone belongs the tribute of our gratitude—*full of grace are thy lips*. Such is the tribute which reaches His throne of glory this day, from thousands of grateful hearts who rejoice in Him as their strength and their Redeemer. As sinners it is grace that we need, and He is *full of grace* in the words which He speaks to sinners; He alone “hath the words of eternal life.” Yes, brethren, *full of grace*, even when we seem only to hear of Him by the hearing of the ear, but, oh! how gracious when at times of special need, He comes to us in His word and ordinances, and manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world, and enables our faith to exclaim—“Now mine eye seeth Thee.” Poor Job, fainting like Lazarus upon the hard couch of his beggary, or sitting in sackcloth and ashes amid the ruins of his former prosperity, could say with rapture, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” though he knew Him only in the dim prospect, and by a faith that moved mountains; and we who know Him as revealed in the Gospel, and who with only a little faith can behold Him so distinctly in all His fair beauty, even we can never so fully understand how *full of grace are his*

lips, as when, in the extremity of human want, our blessed experience has found Him, indeed, "mighty to save." It is when we feel our sins, and yearn for pardon and renewal, that His words are pleasant words. And oh! in sorrow and bereavement, and when we are sick of a world that is vanity; or, in the prospect of death, when we turn our pale faces to the wall and find how vain is the help of man; then, when His word is tried unto the uttermost, how do His servants love it! How great is the power of the Gospel, when nothing else is strong; how sweet when all beside is bitterness! How *full of grace are the lips* of the Good Physician who only can say—"thy sins are forgiven thee," or—"thy brother shall rise again," or—"to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!"

And now let us dwell a moment on the blessed truth that this comfortable Gospel of CHRIST, is "the everlasting Gospel." The angel whom St. John beheld in the heavens, proclaimed it such, as he bore it, on his mighty wings, through the universe. It was as the Great Missionary, therefore, that the Father said unto the Son: "Good luck have thou with thine honour," and thus *blessed him forever* in His work, as the Prophet, Priest, and

King of the Israel of GOD. Furthermore, as the Father sent the Son, so the Son has sent the Spirit to abide with us forever, and His ministers to preach His Gospel to every creature. Thus His word endureth forever, and is blessed of the Father, to "prosper in that whereunto He sent it." His kingdom shall have no end. It is to accomplish the work which He undertook in becoming man; it is to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. In vain, my brethren, do men invent a new Gospel, or strive to supplant the old. Whatever is to be done for mankind, as sinners, and as blind and needy mortals, is to be done through JESUS CHRIST, and by the efficacy of His atoning cross. The event which we are now celebrating is not one which, by any possibility, can prove a failure. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not this word which we preach; and we may rejoice, as we keep the feast, in the fullest assurance that all the world will sooner or later know Immanuel, and adore Him, in the same psalms and hymns, and with the same Eucharistic sacrifice, in which we show forth His birth, and His death, this day. For, let us recall the psalm of which the text is part, and which is the charter of His universal supremacy. While it offers terms

even to rebels, and proposes a long truce, that they may be conciliated and won over to the kingdom, it is not less plain that it gives a rod of iron to the Son of GOD, invests Him as a conqueror, and ordains that His enemies shall lick the dust. This royal babe is girded with a sword, and His arrows are very sharp. Against Him the kings of the earth may stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, but the Lord hath sworn and will not repent; the heathen shall be His inheritance, and the utmost part of the earth His possession; unto Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. Be wise now, therefore, and "kiss the Son."

My brethren, the spirit of this whole psalm, as of the festival of Christmas itself, is that of warm affection to CHRIST personally, and of attachment to His cause and kingdom, the most devoted and profound. In all false Gospels, and in all refinements upon the Gospel as it is, it is observable that men continually take away the personal JESUS, and dress up some abstraction, or speculation, of their own, and set it forth as the essence of true religion. But read the four Evangelists! They simply display the Master, and allow Him to draw the heart to Himself with the bands of His love.

Nor do the epistles less present us with the personal Messiah. There is the same JESUS, in every argument of St. Paul. Yet you shall travel through long and weary essays which claim to be evangelical, and alas! no CHRIST! You shall find whole systems claiming to be Christian, from which everything is obliterated and put away with scorn, that can possibly associate the life of CHRIST, with the life of man, or make the great facts of the Gospel the living principle of every heart, that heeds it. Now what is the effect of this abstract Christianity on the religion of the age? Without impeaching the sincerity of thousands who confess CHRIST, with no definite ideas of His person, or His kingdom, who can fail to remark the unloving temper of modern piety, and its cold and calculating tone? Where is that religion of the purified affections which characterized the saints of old? Who loves his Saviour more than father and mother? Who feels for His truth as for something inestimably precious, against which he cannot brook an insult, or bear a lie? Who dares, now, to say, in the sense which Scripture suggests to us, "Do not I hate them that hate thee, oh Lord?" And yet such is the spirit of the psalm of which the text is part, and we cannot utter

it sincerely, unless such are our sentiments of devotion to CHRIST. Is it then, a sentiment at war with Charity? On the contrary, 'tis the sentiment of Charity itself, which "rejoiceth in *the truth*." In a word, 'tis the sentiment of ennobling loyalty to Messiah's crown. If I mistake not the spirit of the Christian religion, it is the love of CHRIST—the love of CHRIST, personally; the love of CHRIST, exclusively, and against all pretenders; the love of CHRIST, through good report and evil report, as the constraining principle of life and death. Now it was in this spirit of whole-souled devotion, that a good man once said *he loved a good hater*; he loved, that is, a man whose principles are unselfish, and who could so identify himself with what he believed, as to feel personal wrong and outrage when it is unjustly, or cruelly attacked. Now I will not say that no Christian is devoid of this generous and ardent devotion to his Master personally, for I have known Christians cast in such a mould, that not even grace itself seemed, much, to exalt them above men whose pulse never quickens with a generous emotion, and whose eye never glistens with an unselfish tear. But I do say, shame on a Christian who cannot tell what it is to hate the enemies of his Master as enemies, while he

loves them as blood-bought souls, whom he would not injure for a world, but for whom he would sacrifice great things to do them good! Yes, shame on the believer, who is so bloodless at heart, and so faint of head, that he cannot understand what it is to feel a holy indignation against misbelief and blasphemy; who, in short, is indifferent to what men say of his Master, or to the malice and hatred with which they crucify Him afresh, and rail against His Cross and Crown! True he must not mistake a spirit of intolerance and retaliation for this spirit of love to CHRIST. The loyalty which I commend does not call down fire from heaven upon CHRIST'S enemies; but, rather, it heaps live coals on their heads, in works of charity and mercy, and then finds vent in uttering before CHRIST, out of a good and true heart, such words of burning zeal for Him, and for His kingdom, as the text puts into our mouths. Alas! to many a man such words are words of unmeaning adulation: and that is the fact which I lament, for it betrays the coldness, and the deadness, which I am endeavouring to rebuke. What a great statesman once said of modern society is too true of the Church itself. The age of high and noble sentiment is gone. It is the age of calculators and

economists, in religion. Men are Christians according as it will pay. They go about ready to strike hands with CHRIST'S enemies, if only they may have their price. There are some who call themselves Christians, whose whole life seems reduced to a poor apology for professing his name; whose sordid habits, and mean affections, seem always ready to set their faith at sale; whose very countenances have contracted a shrivelling from their souls, and whose conduct, in every emergency that tries their character, seems to say—"what will ye give me, and I will betray Him unto you." I know alas! that a nobler and truer Christian may sometimes greatly err. How great was St. Peter's fall; and yet how different from the fall of Judas! Peter had his faults, was over confident and rash. He could strike a rash blow, and he could forget himself, oh, how horribly! how all but fatally! The saving thing in such a character is, that it cannot, deliberately, deny the Lord. It cannot become a traitor for a piece of money. It cannot sell the Lord of Glory for silver. And then, when it comes to itself, the awful reaction is genuine penitence, and not mere remorse. Judas hangs himself on his gallows; but poor, humbled Peter comes back again to his Master, clasps His feet,

and with streaming eyes exclaims—*Thou knowest that I love thee*: yes, and then goes forth, and takes up his cross, and dies for Jesus, redeeming his pledge at last—“Lord I am ready to go with Thee, both unto prison, and to death.” Oh, apart from those infirmities which Scripture sets before us, for a warning, would God the spirit of ardent, loyal, penitent Peter, were the spirit of the Church, once more! I conjure you, brethren, if you are Christians, be Christians, with a soul. If you fail of this, you catch not the spirit of this feast, which is the spirit of the text; the spirit of heartfelt homage, and profound personal love, to the holy Child; the spirit of Mary when she said, “my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my Saviour.”

You, then, who are now about to surround this holy altar, see that you bring hearts to your Saviour, as well as words, and bended knees! Come, as those wise men came who sought Him, diligently, from a far-off land, bringing their caskets full of fragrance and of tribute. Come, as those shepherds came, who returned praising and blessing God. Come, as king David came, when in the Spirit he indited this glorious ode, worshipping his own Son, according to the flesh, and desiring to see Him, as

the true Solomon, the Prince of Peace, while he inaugurated Messiah's empire in the prophetic words—"Gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh, oh thou most Mighty, according to thy worship and renown. Thy seat, oh God! endureth forever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. I will remember thy name from one generation to another, therefore shall the people give thanks unto thee, world without end."

SERMON IX.

CHRIST BEFORE THE INCARNATION.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME; THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, HE HATH DECLARED HIM.—St. John, i. 18.

THERE is no key to the Scriptures like the creed. He who reads them, without that assistance which is derived from a knowledge of the faith, must often find himself involved in inextricable confusion. For the Scriptures are to be read and searched, indeed, in the spirit of the noble Bereans. But how did the Bereans search them? As believers, or as mere inquirers? First, “they received the word with all readiness of mind,” from the testimony of the Apostles; and then, with the great outline of Christian doctrine in their hearts, they explored the Scriptures, “whether these things were so.” They compared the

Apostolic Creed with the Law and the Prophets; delightedly perceiving a harmony, and a clearness of evidence, which they must otherwise have failed to detect; and so, their faith was strengthened; and to faith was added manliness; and to manliness, knowledge. It is a recognized part of the Christian system, that we should first learn "all the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the Apostles' creed," and then, by a life-long study of the Holy Scriptures, "know the certainty of those things wherein we have been catechized."

I am at loss to imagine how any one, entirely ignorant of the faith, as to the blessed Trinity, could gain any idea from the text, that should not conflict with innumerable other Scriptures, and make war with the simplest facts of the Gospel. It is in fact, the strongest evidence of that fundamental verity of our holy religion, that, once apprehended, it gives unity and harmony to the entire Scriptures, and shows the Law, and the Prophets, and the Gospels, to be woven, in their divers shades and colours, upon one strong warp of doctrine, which everywhere underlies the pattern, though it may be altogether concealed in one part, while, in another, the great design of the fabric requires that it should appear.

Now the text can be understood on these principles only; for there is, at least, a two-fold difficulty to be met, which can, in no other imaginable way, be overcome. *First*, it asserts that no man ever saw GOD at any time; but *second*, it declares that the only begotten Son is in the bosom of the Father, and has fully manifested, expounded, or declared Him to the world. It will be allowed that the only begotten Son here intended is the Son of Man and that He is, and was, very man. There is a difficulty then, in the fact, that while one who is perfect man, is, in the one member of the sentence, declared to be in the very bosom of the Father, the preceding portion of the text, declares as certainly, that "no man hath seen GOD at any time." Nor will an inspection of the original assist us, at all, in the difficulty, since it seems rather to increase it, by the intimation that while this exposition of the Father was fully made by the Son, in the days of His flesh, He, nevertheless, continued in the Father's bosom; so that, at the same moment, He was dwelling with Him in heaven, and manifesting Him on earth.

And besides all this, we have, in other scriptures, repeated assertions that GOD has, at various times, been seen by men. The text is,

indeed, supported by as many scriptures which declare that God is invisible. "Thou canst not see my face," said the Lord to Moses, "for there shall no man see my face and live." Again, St. Paul speaks of Him as the Lord, "whom no man hath seen, nor can see;" and, we are taught elsewhere, that the vision of God, or the enjoyment of His essential presence, is the great and crowning glory of the blessed in their immortal state, and that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." How is it then, that we are to reconcile, with these plain assertions, those apparently contradictory scriptures to which we have referred? It is expressly said that "God spake to Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Again, of Moses, and the Elders of Israel, it is said, "they saw the God of Israel;" and again, in few words, that "they saw God." You will readily recall to mind the story of Jacob, who after wrestling with the angel, and discovering his true character, called the place Peniel, or the face of God, saying, "I have seen God, face to face, and my life is preserved."

But oh, to the believer, how clearly through all these apparent clouds, breaks forth the great Sun of Righteousness, disclosing and illuminating all! The manifestation of the Word

of GOD, in the flesh, incorporates with the Gospel all that history which goes before, of the dealings of GOD with man. We discover the length and breadth, and depth, and height, of the Mediatorial system, as including all dispensations, and stretching through all time. We distinguish between GOD in the Unity of His essence, and the Trinity of His personality; and everywhere, we see the Word discovering Himself, and GOD hiding himself, so that, at once, GOD is invisible, and GOD is seen: hidden in His essential being, but disclosed and interpreted and manifested to man, in the person of His only begotten Son.

The text seems to be introduced, by the Apostle, on purpose to meet a difficulty of the Jew; for as he had just declared, that "the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST," the Jew's mind was naturally led to a comparison of JESUS with Moses, and to a preference of Moses, on the ground of his personal conferences with GOD. St. John asserts the immense superiority of JESUS, on this very ground. No man, at any time, had seen GOD, in His essence; but CHRIST, the only-begotten of the Father, and the perpetual partner of His bosom, being with Him,

and continuing with Him, has alone fully manifested Him to men.

In recognizing this great harmonious plan, of God's revelations of Himself, only through His Son, we are led to a study of most interesting character; that of the manifestations of CHRIST before the Incarnation. For now we see that, though the great exposition of the Father was made by GOD manifest in the flesh, all the revelations of GOD, with which Scripture acquaints us, were revelations of the Son, and of GOD in Him, and through Him. While we are considering the Word made flesh, it is at once profitable and delightful, therefore, to recognize Him, as He who was before Abraham; as He who talked with Adam; whom, amid the types and shadows of the Law, many of the fathers and the prophets, beheld in a personal similitude; and of whom they spake familiarly, as the Angel of the Covenant; the Jehovah-Angel; the Angel of Jehovah's presence, or his "Visible Revealer." The commerce of the ancient prophets, with the GOD, whose messages they announced, is a preliminary, but important, subject of thought. When the Lord is represented as speaking to the prophet, we understand now that it was the Son, who spake; but how did He thus reveal Himself?

The answer, as to all ordinary cases, seems to be given us, in plain words, in the book of Numbers. "If there be a prophet, I will make myself known unto him, in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." Here then is the secret of such revelations as that which Isaiah enjoyed, "when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." It was a vision of GOD, in an ecstasy, or trance; and what is more, it was a vision of the Godhead, as near to the actual vision of His essential glory, as was ever granted. Yet we learn, from St. John, that the glory which Isaiah then beheld was the glory of CHRIST. It was a vision of GOD, in CHRIST, accompanied by that song of the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy," in which the Trinity of the Godhead is intimated; and when he had seen it, the prophet cried, "woe is me . . . for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts." In such a vision, the invisible Father, was manifested by the Son, in the power of the Spirit, who inspired the prophets; and by this memorable instance, we may the better understand the assertion of St. Peter, that the Spirit which was in the prophets, and which "testified beforehand the sufferings of CHRIST," was the Spirit of CHRIST Himself.

Nor can I forbear to remark, in passing, that he who will carefully consider such histories as this, and compare it, as I have done, with the apostolic writings, will be able to gather much evidence, for himself, in favour of a high estimate of the Scriptures, as the work of Inspiration. The Holy Ghost “spake by the prophets”—says the Creed; and He was “the Spirit of CHRIST”—says the Apostle. When I meditate upon the conjoint agency of the Son, and of the Spirit, in producing a revelation of GOD to man, in the form of a written ode, prophecy, or book; when I behold all the noble faculties and powers of Isaiah, filled with the Holy Ghost, for the glorious purpose to which they were naturally unequal; and, when I see the invisible GOD, thus declared, or manifested, by His eternal Word, before He was incarnate; I feel drawn towards the Old Testament, not less than to the New, as a sort of Shekinah, or Glory, in which CHRIST dwells. I see in the Law and the prophets, a pillar of cloud, and a pillar of fire, to the Israel of GOD.

But apart from these prophetic visions, the Eternal Word was pleased to manifest himself, to several of the greater patriarchs, and, on extraordinary occasions, to many of his people

together, in personal similitudes. The great difference between these apparitions, and the prophetic vision, is clearly expounded in the book of Numbers, in the sequel of the text, already cited. Having declared the manner of his speaking to the prophets, the Lord distinguishes Moses from an ordinary prophet, saying, "with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparantly, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord, shall he behold." Now it is a memorable fact, that these words were themselves spoken, in an audible voice, out of the pillar of cloud, in which the Lord is said to have come down: and St. Stephen, in the clearest manner, identifies with CHRIST, the Jehovah-Angel who thus, in the pillar of cloud, was with Moses and "the Church in the wilderness," and who first spake unto Moses out of the burning bush. The same, then, promised to disclose Himself in a personal similitude to Moses. As indeed He did; for we read not only of a communion with God, face to face, in the mountain, but also of a time when Moses longed to see Him in His robes of majesty and glory, and was, in part, gratified with what he desired. Hidden in the clefts of the rock, while the Everlasting Word passed by, he was

permitted to see the disappearing trail of his Redeemer's glory, but only as the splendours of His presence vanished from the sight, leaving the impression of One, who, with averted face, had disclosed the similitude of a man, arrayed in the light and majesty of God.

Of the more memorable apparitions of the Son of God, before the Incarnation, we may instance a few others, though none so remarkable as this: unless, indeed, we except that first, awful, interposition, of the Lord God in Paradise, when He revealed Himself to our first parents, at once to promise His Incarnation, and to assert his authority, as their Judge. To the patriarch Abraham, the same Lord appeared, with two angelic attendants, in the similitude of a man, when He announced the birth of Isaac, and the judgment of Sodom: while, again, as the Angel of the Covenant, He came to Jacob, and wrestled with him as a man, and displayed His power as God, and blessed him, in His own mysterious name, and disappeared.

But two other special apparitions of the Son of God, deserve to be noted, as bearing directly upon our knowledge of Him, in the Gospel, as our Great High Priest, and the Captain of our Salvation. To show the essential, and eternal, royalty and priesthood of Christ, as the sub-

stance of all intervening types and shadows, from the time of Abraham to that of the Incarnation, it pleased the Prince of Peace, to disclose Himself to the father of the faithful, in a similitude, as Melchizedek; to prefigure his great sacrifice of Himself, by an oblation of bread and wine; and to receive tithes of Abraham, as the eternal priest, of whom the Levitical priesthood should be but a tributary, and momentary symbol. It is fair, indeed, to say, that many of the learned prefer to consider Melchizedek rather as a type, than as an apparition of the Son of God; but the argument of St. Paul seems to me, in the strongest manner, to support the opinion of those venerable fathers of the Church, who maintain that Melchizedek is but a name for an apparition of CHRIST himself; a similitude, not imperfect, like others, but identified, at once, by majesty, by sacerdotal office, by days without beginning, and life without end, with the Son of God. The Apostle thus expounds the story, stripping it of those mysterious disguises which it wears, in the Pentateuch; and telling the Hebrews, plainly, that, His name Melchizedek, meant only, being interpreted, that He was the King of Righteousness, and that His title, King of

Salem, was but the foreshadowing of His real dignity, as the Prince of Peace.

That this most complete, and significant similitude of CHRIST, should not be weakened, or lowered, to the character of a bare typical representation, seems to me but congruous, when we consider the unanimity with which a less striking exhibition of CHRIST, to Joshua, is allowed its true import, as a genuine apparition. Joshua, as a type of JESUS, was made to behold his great original, in a manner corresponding to that which taught Moses to know his Master, and to worship the Great Deliverer of Israel, as revealed in the bush. On the eve of his invasion of Canaan, to conquer the Land of promise, as he walked, perhaps lost in solemn meditation upon the work which the Lord had given him to do, he beheld, suddenly, the figure as of man, with a sword drawn in his hand. When he questioned the apparition, he received the answer—"as Captain of the host of the Lord, am I now come." It was enough. The lesser Joshua knew the Lord, whose name he bore: the soldier of CHRIST recognized his great Commander; he fell on his face and worshipped: "and the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place

whereon thou standest is holy; and Joshua did so." In this manner, it pleased JESUS to show His typical forerunner, what a mere shadow he was of good things to come; and to teach us, in Gospel times, that a greater Joshua is marshalling the sacramental host of of his elect, not only for a victory over the world, but also to enter the heavenly Canaan, and to possess the eternal rest which remaineth for the people of God.

So, then, as again, in the fiery furnace, with the Three Children, we behold, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, one walking amid the people of His covenant, "in form, like the Son of God." Doubtless, these personal appearances of their promised Messiah were designed, among other things, to refresh them with the strongest assurances of His final manifestation in the flesh. They taught the Hebrew to know, and to expect, his God, in person; and meanwhile they convinced him of His presence with the seed of Abraham, according to His covenant; and of His fidelity, as their strength and their Redeemer. They explain many abrupt and lyrical allusions of the patriarchs and prophets; and they give meaning to many a passage of Scripture, which, faith explores and delights in, while to stupid and stubborn

unbelief, they are barren, and unprofitable. Moreover, they constitute a tender tie between us and the ancient Church. And oh, how they illuminate such language as that of Isaiah:—"in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in his love, and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them, all the days of old!" . And how beautiful it is to see the same Angel-Jehovah, whom we know as CHRIST—devoutly recognized, in similiar language, by Jacob, before the Law, and by Malachi, the last of the prophets. When the hoary patriarch was about to die, he blessed the sons of his darling Joseph in these words:—"the God which fed me, all my life long, unto this day; the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Malachi, closes up all prophecy, in a promise of His speedy Incarnation—saying: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple; even the Angel of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."

From such facts we learn the better how to entertain the glorious visiter, whom in the fulness of time, we behold manifest in the flesh. This holy child, is indeed the Ancient

of Days. This is the Angel that dwelt in the bush; this is the great Melchizedek; the Captain of our Salvation, and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This is He who is in the bosom of the Father, now, while He interprets and manifests the Father to the World. This is that mysterious Son of GOD, "whom none knoweth but the Father," so essential is His own divinity; "while none knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." See then what is meant by the expression, "He hath declared Him." We know the Father, who is invisible, by knowing the Son, who is manifested. As in times past, this manifestation was partial, and interrupted, and occasional, and transient, so now in the Gospel it is complete, and entire. In CHRIST we see GOD. In CHRIST, we know the character of GOD. In Him we learn His essential attributes, and his vast plans and purposes of mercy to mankind.

But, more than all, in CHRIST, GOD expounds to us His sympathies, His compassions, His tenderness, and love. Behold, in Him, that God who is indeed great and terrible, and of whom we fail to gather, in any other way, conceptions which seem fitted to our nature, our wants, and our infirmities. When the

blessed Apostles had companied long time with JESUS; when they had seen His stupendous miracles, and had been witnesses, at the same time, of His poverty and His condescension; they had still to learn that in their familiar approaches to their dear Master, they had acquainted themselves also, with the invisible GOD. "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

There remains this practical thought, that if we would know GOD, we must know CHRIST. We may be sure that just so far as we are ignorant of JESUS and His Gospel, so far are we strangers to our Maker, "without hope, and without GOD in the world." True, indeed, we may know much of GOD from nature: the heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork;" yet just as true it is that, so blind are sinful men, and so darkened is the face of nature, through the works of the devil, that nature alone has never expounded GOD to sinners, as sinners need to know Him;

and has never weaned a single soul from the folly of wickedness, or the blindness of superstition and misbelief. The whole creation groaned for GOD manifest in the flesh; and lo! the Father sent the Son. Have you received Him? Do you know Him? Have you sat at His feet, and learned of Him, what you are in yourself; what you are in the sight of GOD; and how you may be at peace with Him? Oh consider, brethren, for what you are henceforth accountable, in that GOD has thus unfolded Himself to you, and condescended to reveal to you all the riches of His goodness, and then to invite you to be enriched with Himself, in CHRIST, as sons of GOD, and joint heirs of his kingdom and glory!

Nor must I conclude without reminding you that it was not merely the life of CHRIST that expounded GOD to man. After all, the great exhibition of GOD, in His holiness, and His love, is made in the sacrifice of Calvary. "Behold the Lamb of GOD that taketh away the sins of the world!" Behold that man of sorrows, the just for the unjust, bleeding upon the cross. In His awful agonies, see exhibited the immensity of that guilt, which GOD Himself cannot forgive without a satisfaction to His holy law; without a reconciliation of His Justice with Mercy,

through a sufficient atonement. Behold again, the Crucified, as the Son of God; and see Him who exacts the sacrifice, Himself providing the victim. The "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," lo! it is He who thus interprets the boundless mercy of the Father, "in His own body, on the tree!" See the immensity of God's compassions; His unfathomable love! Beyond this, the Son has nothing to manifest, of God to man. In this, revelation is complete; "it is finished." A crucified Saviour is the whole of knowledge, and of wisdom, which is possible to man: and CHRIST, known and believed and loved, is God manifested to His child, as He cannot be manifested to the world. Blessed JESUS! as we know Thee now, by faith, may ours be the blessing, denied to Apostles themselves, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

SERMON X.

PREPARATION FOR TIME.

NEW-YEAR'S EVE.

AND DAVID SAID UNTO SAUL, I CANNOT GO WITH THESE FOR I HAVE NOT PROVED THEM. AND DAVID PUT THEM OFF HIM.—
1 Samuel xvii. 39.

To a reflective mind all periods of human life are solemn and suggestive. The return of a birthday, or of any marked anniversary, awakens conjecture as to the future, while it furnishes material for comparisons of the present with the past. The stern advance of life, and, in middle life, the visible approach of the years in which we must say, "I have no pleasure in them," force themselves upon the attention, on the return of anniversaries, and almost at such times only. And if at such a moment of startling consciousness, the good Spirit of grace suggests an enquiry as to our employment of past time, or moves us to earnest

resolves of economizing the uncertain remainder, the opportunity is a golden one, for counsel and encouragement. Then "a word fitly spoken" may be greatly blessed, and if the thoughts can be directed to the great business of life and to the prize of immortality, the occasion has been profitably directed, and may have effected the glorious end of saving a soul from death.

On these principles, the eve of New-Year's Day may afford to a Christian pastor a special opportunity for suggestions and remonstrances, such as are always timely, but which too generally fail to meet with sympathy, or with that state of mind which is best fitted to receive them. It is a great thing when men are prepared to feel and think together, and New-Year's Day is a sort of common birthday, when all the feelings of one's personal anniversary are renewed in each individual, so that thousands are sensible of a common advance towards eternity. The great tide of life moves so that we feel it. New-Year's Day is the anniversary which gives a perceptible unity to a whole generation. We all find ourselves born at once into a fresh and mysterious epoch of the world's history. We look at one another with curiosity, and with something of anxiety too.

as if the new stage of existence must bring forth something of momentous concern to all. And though the day itself, as a starting point, is arbitrary and conventional, yet as it is generally received, it is a reality, and proves itself capable of affecting the heart. Our little planet has fulfilled another of her numbered circuits around the sun, bearing through space her burthen of misery and sin, and withal, her glorious elements of a new creation, and her treasures of faith, and hope, and charity. Inimitable clock-work! Mysterious dial-plate! which makes time out of eternity, and measures periods by which God Himself condescends to regulate even things in heaven. How sublime the reflection that these years are all calendered by the Most High, and are filling up the limits of His patience and forbearance, while they are bringing on the Judgment in its season, and hastening the fearful day when "all these things shall be dissolved." Such is a Christian's foremost thought, but even men of the world are not incompetent to thoughts which connect with Providence, and may be shaped religiously. "No one," says poor Charles Lamb, "ever regarded the first of January with indifference: it is that from which all date their time, and count upon

what is left." Yes, indeed, and who can forget, at such a date, that "our times are in God's hand?" The reflection that these successive stages of our mortal life are absolutely beyond our control; that they are limited, and are rapidly consuming; that the end is near, at furthest, and that beyond is an untried region which has no limits nor measures, is enough to make any man serious who is not a fool. If there be such a thing as a sincere atheist, who is rational, (which I do not believe possible,) one would think even he would be affected, at such a time, with terrible misgivings. How can he know that things material are eternal, when he feels his own body crumbling into dust? How can he doubt a Providence, when he sees all things but himself, obeying a law which implies a lawgiver infinitely wise and powerful? And how can he fail to crave some help from revelation, when he feels immortal yearnings within him, and yet believes that every tick of the time-piece is working off all that he inherits of existence, and that every hour-bell is the knell of his intellectual as well as of his material being? He cannot deny that the soul's immortality is possible, and in that possibility, he admits not only that of the eternal Spirit, but

also the probable truth of the revelation, which alone claims to demonstrate both, by bringing life and immortality to light.

You may suppose that I am forgetting the text, but it is my purpose, soon to employ it very practically. I have been embarrassed, not with the lack of something to say on the subject of the closing year, but with the multitude of matters on which it seemed to me it might be profitable to enlarge. It is a solemn thing to occupy the position of a pastor, and, in looking over a congregation, to reflect that if one's own life be spared, there must be those before him, to whom, in the course of another year, he will, undoubtedly, be called to render the last succours of religion, and then to lay them in the grave till the resurrection morning. One longs, under the thrill of such a conviction, simply to entreat men with tears, to "agonize to enter in at the straight gate;" and to stir young and old alike to such an effort, why should it not be enough merely to repeat the truism, "this year, perhaps, thou shalt die," or to utter the Saviour's own impressive admonitions—"your time is always ready," and "ye know not what a day may bring forth?" Oh the possibilities of a single twelve-

month! To some what eternal changes it must bring!

“Gray hairs are here and there upon thee,” oh young man; how long hast thou been reckoned young? Have you not seen the first snow flakes of autumn drop into the dark river and disappear, while the deep white snows of winter lie long unmelted? Even so, how much more uncertain is middle-life than hale and frosty age! Review the dead of past years. How many have died young; how many in full career! From these very courts of the Lord’s house, how many of our fellow-worshippers have passed suddenly away. The great summoner is even now among us: whom next shall he single out; to whom does he whisper that the places which now know him shall soon know him no more? I look about me, and shrink from the reply. But it is not death alone that makes the future fearful. Who but God can unfold a single year’s contingencies of woe? How dangerous to make even experience our only monitor, when events that confound experience, and falsify all calculation, are continually falling out suddenly, when men think not! Futurity, like other spectres, is most appalling, because we strive in vain to make out its shape, and advance to-

wards it, in the dark. Yet in fact, it is no spectre, but rather a gigantic reality, a "strong man armed." There is no man living who can afford to confront it without defences upon which he can rely. The text suggests discretion in the choice of our reliances, and such is the aim of my exhortations.

I am sometimes angry and sometimes sad, when I observe the unmeaning sentiment which every New Year's day calls forth from the many pert and frivolous creatures who "handle the pen of the writer." Unseemly trifling often, and sometimes a melancholy and heathenish complaint of fate and destiny. But even worse are their attempts to console and counsel; and almost always their prescriptions to the young are such as are calculated to mislead. They moralize, as if we were yet in the darkness of paganism; as if there were no Providence to oversee us, and no such thing as prayer to secure His protection. For example, I have met in several books, and have heard from several speakers, a favourite quotation which appears to be used as if it were a part of holy writ. "Look not mournfully into the past," says the writer, "it comes not back again; wisely improve the present; it is thine; go forth to meet the shadowy future without

fear and with a manly heart." Now, part of this is mere talk, but the remnant is much worse than nothing. "Happy is the man that feareth always," says the true wisdom; but here we are advised to rush in, like fools, where angels might tread with fear. Again, our dependence against the future is to be "a manly heart;" as if it might not come in a shape, and with a power, that should quite unman us at the first onset, and leave us with the wounded spirit which none can bear. Then, as for the "shadowy future," how often it takes solid shape against us, so that we cannot reasonably advance to meet it, without misgivings. This may do very well for the strong and active, but what help can such counsel afford to the thousands who are disabled, and faint, and weary, and to whom every step in life is attended with labour and sorrow? Is this the whole that can be said to encourage us, by the worldly wise? With pain, and care, and infirmity lying in wait for us, in all probability; and with certain death, somewhere on the road, can they only bid us press on, as if blind chance were our only god? "Physicians of no value! miserable comforters are they all."

When the stripling David was going forth to encounter the champion of Gath, his under-

taking was, to all appearance, a desperate one. The mighty men of the host of Israel looked on him with pity, and Saul, who durst not venture, himself, was so patronizing to the young hero, as to offer him his own royal armour. He put an helmet of brass upon his head, and he armed him with a coat of mail. Just so much judgment had this man of the world, in equipping a young peasant, fresh from the sheep-folds! It is delightful to contrast with so much prudent folly, the wise temerity of the young adventurer. David suggested trust in God as his great encouragement, and related some signal experiences of the past, in which God had proved himself able and ready to help him in time of need. In this reliance he was not afraid to encounter Goliath, with such simple weapons as he had been used to, in former times. As for the royal armour, he tried it on, in obedience to the king, and he "assayed to go in it." But of what use to him was that showy, but burthensome outside? How would it help him in attacking a giant whose spear was as a weaver's beam? He wisely judged that Despair is best encountered with other weapons than such as he carries himself. *And David said unto Saul I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them.*

The late Bishop Heber, of beloved memory, has a sermon on the fear of death, in which he admirably demonstrates the vanity of all worldly maxims for overcoming it. He remarks that such fears generally increase upon us in proportion as they are attacked with a resolution to treat them philosophically. The same may be said with respect to anxieties about what men call fate, or fortune. It is idle to suggest that misfortune is the lot of thousands? How does that comfort me? Or, to relate the story of others who have suffered; what can that avail? Or to quote sentimental lamentations over mortal sorrow; or to mutter melancholy poetry, as so many do, in condolence with heart-sick mourners: what does it all amount to? Worse than all are those maxims of old heathen philosophy, and those examples of Roman stoicism, which are so often cited. To a Christian they are Saul's armour; he has not proved them; he does not want them. He knows whom he has trusted, and prefers to go forward with defences less apparent to the world, but mighty, through CHRIST, to accomplish the warfare of life, and to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.

Let us observe, then, how David prepared himself for his exploit, after he had discarded

the useless armour of Saul. "He took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them into the shepherd's bag, which he had, even in a scrip, and his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine." He did not discard the use of means; he enlisted skill and common sense, and adapted his means to the end, and so went forward. But, we are not to suppose that the force of the contrast is seen in the difference between shield and spear, and the sling and stones. We shall soon see that David's great reliance was the name of his GOD, as the object of his faith. When the Philistine scorned and cursed him, he answered—"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee, in the name of the Lord of hosts, the GOD of Israel." I have often thought that it is an argument for David's authorship of that noble psalm, the *Deus auribus*, that it contains the passage—"I will not trust in my bow; it is not my sword that shall help me, but it is Thou that savest us from our enemies." For again he says, "Through Thee will we overthrow our enemies, and *in Thy name* will we tread them under that rise up against us." There is something here, of the youthful hero, as well as of the sweet

singer of Israel. The reliance of youth is celebrated in age. It has been tried and it endures.

We live in a land, and in a day, of remarkable enterprizes. The spirit of adventure is characteristic of all our people. To the young it communicates itself like a contagion. It is the lot of our young nation. I do not oppose it, but I beg to direct the attention, of young men especially, to the great spiritual dangers which spring from such a state of society. Life becomes a scene of restless activity. Young men have little time to form their character, and to acquire habits of wisdom and piety, before they are launched into the world. They soon begin to feel their lack of something to give them a quiet conscience, and a hopeful confidence. In the absence of true religion, Satan, in form as an angel of light, is prompt to supply them with stimulants which they can relish, and presents them with armour, which he commends as all they can require. In how many ways does he thus contrive to effect his great purpose, to make men fall down and worship him! And yet, is it not surprising, when one considers all that is at stake, that so many should commit their souls, and all that is most precious to them, to the hazard of bold

experiments in religion? How can men who have, at least, been taught their catechism, and who have learned their Creed, and the Lord's prayer, as well as the Ten Commandments, throw aside this simple shepherd's scrip, to dress themselves in the untried armour of unbelief, or of novel theory, or of anything else that would supersede the faith of ages, and the holy morals, and the blessed hopes, which the Gospel alone inspires? Who has proved them? The Gospel is tried, and it survives unshaken, and none who have trusted in it, have ever desired anything else. But when we reflect that every new year, since the Christian era began, has seen its crop of vanities in the shape of improvements on the Gospel, and that every year has numbered the acknowledged victims of such impostures, how is it that folly's flame still flies, and that souls still run after its false light, to choke themselves in quagmires? When I read of some new bait of moon-struck enthusiasm, or listen to some unhappy youth's confession of vapid scepticism, showing, at once, a self-confidence the most consummate, and an ignorance unfathomably profound; and when I trace this, his fault and misfortune, to some specious sophist who presumes to deal with sin-sick souls, as quacks

deal with the bodies of the simpletons who trust them, I am amazed at the wiles of Satan, and at his marvellous success. How is it that the shrewdness of intellect, so general among all classes of our people, is found so often at war with common sense, in matters of religion? How is it that a little learning proves so universally a dangerous thing? Let me suggest the answer. David was perhaps flattered, at first, by the offer of Saul's armour, and had he been less wise than he was, in the fear of GOD, he would certainly have gone into the battle in that showy array. So, it is the flattery of false science that beguiles men of their conscience and their reason. "Ye shall be as gods." This is the boast of every form of unbelief, in commending itself especially to the young; and few have the firmness, and the faith, when once fairly drest in their folly, to put it off, because *they have not proved it.*

But it is not only in contrast with the silly creeds of "philosophy falsely so called," that I beg to commend to you the simple faith of CHRIST, as the true safeguard of life; for I see quite as many, among us, who without taking the pains to be unbelievers, are in danger of perishing at last, through a vague worldly-mindedness. They keep their palaces, like

strong men armed, and their goods are in peace. But when a stronger shall come, what then? Let me illustrate my meaning by quoting the confessions of one, who seems to have spoken rather as the interpreter of such characters, than for himself particularly. "Shall I confess a truth?" says the writer, from whose meditations on New-Year's Eve I have already cited a remark: "I feel these audits too powerfully. I begin to count the probabilities of duration, and to grudge at the expenditure of moments like miser's farthings. In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count on these periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away like a weaver's shuttle. *I would set up my tabernacle here.* A new state of being appals me." Oh, to a Christian, what a horrible impiety, what a mournful heathenism, in such words as these! They sound like Horace, or some old Epicurean, among the Greeks; yet they are written, by one baptized, to express the real feelings of thousands, who, to all appearance, are Christians only in name. To think of it! "I would set up my tabernacle here." What a daring confession of an earthly mind! Yet blame not him, who wrote it, above others who only

live it. Such is the sordid human heart, in its nakedness. It builds not only on the sand, but in the dirt. It hears the believer on the mount of GOD, saying, "it is good to be here," and here "let us build three tabernacles;" and its only response, from this deep valley of the shadow of death is, nay—"a new state of being appals me; I would set up my tabernacle here." Revolting thought! It is worse than at first, when we repeat it again. But oh, how forcibly it teaches that the only preparation for time is preparation for eternity.

I have endeavoured thus, to strip the deluded soul of its false armour, but I must not stop without striving that it may also be clothed upon with the righteousness of CHRIST. I see before me young and old, rich and poor, together, pressing on to untried destinies, to death, and to judgment, and to eternity. If these be the things which constitute the future, how dares any one to live at a venture, and with no preparation for the fearful changes that await him? Suppose I could assure any young person, now before me, that this coming year should be his last; and that, next year at this time, his name should be carved in cold stone, at his head, and the sods piled upon his breast; and that his condition then should be

fixed forever, such as he may make it, during his few remaining months: would he not be concerned to begin to-day? Could he be occupied with anything less than salvation? But now, even though you should survive the year, I beg you reflect, that a few months of it may, as absolutely, settle your eternal condition, as if your death should immediately succeed them. You are forming your character for eternity. Long before this year shall close, you may have turned from the path of life, forever, and have entered, irretrievably, upon that road, of which the end is death.

A practical word, then, as to the good resolutions which you may be disposed to form, and which should all be directed to the one great and definite object of deciding the character, and fixing it upon the Rock CHRIST JESUS. Perhaps I speak to some who are a little startled, on reflection, to find themselves far gone in life, with habits settling into fixedness, but without any growing habits of obedience to GOD, or such as spring from a sense of duty. Yet, how often they have resolved to begin new courses, and to form good habits! Why have they so little succeeded? I think, because of two reasons, chiefly. *First*, their resolutions were vague, and general; and *Second*, in en-

deavouring to keep them, they did not invoke the aid of Him, "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy." Thus, then, men resolve to mend, to be less negligent of religion, to give up evil company, and the like; their resolutions being, too commonly, entirely negative, and quite indefinite. There is nothing specific to be done, and hence the purpose evaporates in a mere emotion. Again, the effort being made, and even well begun, but the grand resource of prayer being forgotten, and all being undertaken in mere human strength, Satan succeeds in breaking the plan in some minute particular, and then introduces exceptions, and then defeats the whole project, by multiplying the exceptions till they become the rule. Not such resolutions are the smooth stones that bring the giant down; not such is the spirit that presses on, and turns Satan's own sword against him, and finally treads him under foot!

Let him, then, who makes resolutions on this eve of a new year, frame them soberly, and upon his knees; make them definite and practical; and go forward, in the spirit of self-distrust, but strong in his faith, and reliance upon God. To such resolutions let me earnestly invite you. Spend the few remaining

hours of this year, in solemn meditation. "Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still." This night, at least, watch as well as pray. Begin another stage of life, not in your beds, folding your arms to sleep, but rather in your closet, bending your knees to worship. Be not as those to whom the first day of the year is as other days, in all respects, save a few stifled reflections, and a few heartless congratulations; who "turn a new leaf" only in the most literal sense of the phrase, and mark day-book and ledger with the fresh date, only to go on as before. Give time to reflection, and much more than reflection must be the product, if we shape our thoughts aright. Oh, what a funeral is that we celebrate to-night; what a portentous nativity comes with the morrow! In the solemn months before us will be repeated, without fail, a round of events which men call ordinary, but which are more important than they seem to be, and, of which, the meanest is a link in the chain of providences, on which the universe depends. Such are marriages and births and deaths, events easily named in the aggregate, but in each particular instance, how full of consequences! Yes, think what is at hand! New souls are to be summoned into being, and millions

must expire. Here comes a bridal train, and there a long procession of widows and of orphans. Fortunes and failures wait their favourites and their victims. Characters are to be made and lost. One shall take his first secret step into fatal guilt; another shall astound the world by the last damning crime of a long unsuspected career of infamy. Eyes, now sparkling with hope, are to become frantic with despair, and cheeks, now rosy with the hues of health and innocence, are to burn with the deeper red of disgrace and shame. If such be the ordinary issues of a year, there can be no need of imagining the fearful possibilities which may affect us, more deeply, in their time. It may be a year of pestilences and famines, or of wars and tumults. It will have its marked calamities, no doubt. But what can be more to the purpose of our present thoughts, than the fact, that a twelve-month hence, thousands who now care nothing for all these things, will be effectually cured of such madness; but alas! too late? What more impressive than the fact, that thousands who spurn salvation now, will then be wailing over their misspent time, and crying in vain, from the pit of perdition, for a single hour, on earth, as prisoners of hope!

You then, who are yet where you can pray and be accepted, be wise while it is called to-day; and, like the young shepherd of Bethlehem, be afraid to go forward, except in the name of the Lord your God. It is a strengthening fact, that New-Year's day, with, us is coupled with the sweet remembrance of the name "which is above every name," and which our Lord received on the eighth-day, at His circumcision. Instead of those five smooth stones from the brook, take, then, the name of JESUS, as it were, that of which it is written, "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written." Yes, in the name of JESUS, take your staff in hand, and gird up your loins, and so "go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a *patient* heart." Let the name of JESUS be your Alpha, that it may be your Omega also. Let all your works begin in Him, that in Him they may be continued and ended: and so, in the better words of St. Paul, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith."

SERMON XI.

THE UNCLEANNESS OF RICHES.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

BUT RATHER GIVE ALMS OF SUCH THINGS AS YE HAVE; AND BEHOLD
ALL THINGS ARE CLEAN UNTO YOU.—St. Luke xi. 41.

By the rite of circumcision, our blessed Lord became a debtor to the Law, and undertook to keep it for our sakes. The Law had never been perfectly kept before: it had demonstrated the sinfulness of all men, and their common need of a righteousness not their own. But it had waited for CHRIST as its substance. The Law which showed others to be sinners, only proved the holiness of JESUS, as the end of the Law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. As a test of His character, it proved Him a lamb without blemish, and fit to offer Himself for the sins of others. The circumcision was

therefore a preliminary to His great sacrifice. He became obedient to the Law for man.

The ordinance itself was not Mosaic, but Abrahamic, and betokened the covenant of grace; yet it was foreordained in conformity with the entire spirit of the Law. It presents a complex and most interesting subject, in connection with the religious and civil polity of the Hebrews, both as related to the moral and ceremonial Law, and as foreshadowing the Messiah and the Christian sacrament of baptism. So large a subject cannot be satisfactorily discussed in a single sermon; but I propose to touch upon it in several of its features, as affording instruction to us, and elucidating the relations of a covenant people to a covenant God, alike under the Law, and under the Gospel.

First, as to the rite itself. In harmony with the severity which is the spirit of the Law, and which was requisite to the subduing and developing of a sensual and servile race, this initiatory ordinance was one of blood; and though a trifling operation in itself, it left a life-long mark in the flesh of the Hebrew which was designed to remind him, at all times, that his body and all its members, were subject to Law. It taught him that he was

not a mere animal, to whom his passions and instincts were a sufficient rule of action; but that he was a moral agent, and that his physical and sensual part was to obey his reason, his conscience, and the precepts of his Maker. It was the token, also, of the sanctity of a Hebrew's body, as a vessel of God's mercy to the world. It taught him purity, and a reverence for all his relations in life, as a son, a husband and a father. It reminded him that the seed of Abraham was a holy seed, of whom the promised Messiah was to be born: and thus it hallowed domestic life, and separated, as far as possible, the habits of a pious Israelite, from those of the profligate and the brute. Such, at least, was its design; while it served, at the same time, to nationalize the Hebrews, and to sunder them from surrounding idolatry.

In all this, there is a beautiful analogy with what we observe in the science of husbandry and horticulture. In our fallen world, we recognize a vast difference between the natural and the cultivated plant. The productions of nature are given us in luxuriance and abundance, but before use, they generally require to be developed by a careful process of training. And what is this process? In many instances it is one which begins with the knife, and in

which the knife is constantly required, to restrain a wasteful exuberance, which, though indicative of vigorous life, is found to be destructive of the finer qualities of the tree or plant, and injurious to its fruits. Hence the art of cultivation is one of trimming and pruning, as well as one of manuring and watering; and the result is, that the vine, which before yielded wild grapes, now showers to earth a generous wine, in the vintage; while the tree whose fruit was sour and scrubby in the wilderness, stands in the orchard laden with apples of gold, delightful alike to the palate and to the eye.

How descriptively, then, does St. Paul compare the uncircumcised Gentile to a wild olive tree! He speaks of him as untamed and rank and uncultivated, and contrasts his savage stock with the fat and generous root of Israel, which he tenderly likens, in the richness of its fruitage, to the good olive tree in the garden of God. But now, to pursue the figure of the Apostle, as members of CHRIST, we, also, are grafted into the good olive tree by the circumcision of baptism; we, too, are subjected to the labour of the cultivator, and pruned and purged that we may bear good fruit. Or, to adopt the figure of our Lord Himself: He is

the vine, and we are the branches, while the Father is the husbandman. "Herein is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit. So shall we be His disciples."

But the circumcision of the Jew was part of a great system which extended to everything with which he was concerned. Not only himself and his children must be circumcised, but virtually everything which he possessed; which he handled, or tasted, or touched. In every way, GOD taught the Hebrews that they were a peculiar people, and that their great distinction was that they and theirs were holiness to the Lord. Thus, then, their flocks and their herds were to be sanctified; their fields and their dwellings; their meats and their apparel; their very beds and tables were to be purified, by ceremonies; and according to the observance or neglect of these rites all things were clean or unclean. A holy people were, at all times and seasons, and in all circumstances, to be reminded of that purity which GOD demands, and of that natural corruption to which the world and the flesh are panders, but with which the servant of GOD is required to make war.

Now this ritual cleansing of the Law, though GOD richly rewarded it, was always attended

with sacrifice. It cost the Jew excessive pains, and no small expense of wealth. He tithed his whole income; he offered burnt sacrifices; he paid special offerings for his first-born; he redeemed the firstlings of his flocks, and his herds. Even the trees which he set out he could not use, till he had circumcised them, and dedicated their first fruits in honour of the Law, and to the service of God. Let me call your special attention to this circumcision of trees, as not only illustrative of the whole system which I have endeavoured to expound, but as particularly important in its bearings on the text. "And when ye shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you; it shall not be eaten of. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy, to praise the Lord withal. And, in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the Lord your God."

Observe, now, the three important points in this precept. First, the tree is to be stripped of such fruit as it may bear, for three successive years, and such fruit is to be thrown away, as unclean, and hence unfit for the use of an

Israelite, sealed with the seal of circumcision, and in covenant with God. In the fourth year, the fruit shall be holy; and hence, as now circumcised and clean, it shall be regarded as specially fit to be offered to God, and, as the first fruits of a holy thing, too good to be greedily devoured by man. It shall be "to praise the Lord withal." But "if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy," says St. Paul. This sanctification of the tree to the Lord, has made it henceforth clean and fit for his children. They may now use it, all their life long, as a blessing sent them of their heavenly Father, which they have a right to enjoy. It is a bounty of Providence, which they may use with thanksgiving, and without fear that it will turn to their curse, either in this life, or in the world to come. It is sanctified wealth. It is His gift who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not." It is true riches, and has a blessing upon it: while, of wealth uncircumcised, the text implies the uncleanness and sordidness. There is a prosperity of which it is written, "So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain, which *taketh away the life* of the owners thereof."

But again, we are to note that this is a precept with promise. The third part of the statute

runs thus, "that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the Lord." Here is an appeal at once to obedience and to faith. I who command this am the Creator of the things you call yours. I have a right to give them on such terms as I choose; and you should trust me, that my ordinances are wise, especially when I add the assurance that, in keeping this commandment, there shall be the reward of a greater increase. The apparent tax shall return into your own bosoms manifold. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered, also, himself." Again, it is written, "honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

The Rabbis used to say that an eagle once pounced upon a lamb as it lay upon the altar, and carried it off to its nest to feed its young. But a live coal stuck fast to the sacrifice, and burned up the nest and the eaglets. So much for "robbing God!"

In all this system of discipline, how entirely

was the pious Israelite taught to walk by faith and not by sight. How rich in all its moral blessings, was the principle on which, year after year, he patiently refrained from a greedy appropriation of the fruits of his young trees. And when, in the fourth year, he saw his luxuriant crop, now sanctified and holy, how blessed was the effect on his own soul, of the law which taught him that the first and best was too good for himself! This year's increase was the Lord's. His the bounty, and His the first returns, the glory and the praise. This being done, with what a good conscience, and pure enjoyment, he sat thenceforth beneath his own vine and fig-tree, and ate the rewards of his toil and of his faith, at peace with God, and in charity with man! If the modern Jew is miserly, and unblest in his gain, may it not be the result of a retribution, according to this very law? Where now is their dread of sacrilege and where do they "dedicate their tithes with gladness?" Accordingly, if the wealth of a Jew is proverbial, so also is his avarice; and the avaricious man is justly denominated a miser — one miserable in his abundance, and poor in his riches. Not such was the "Israelite indeed," in the day when he "feared the Lord, and gave unto the Most High

according as he had enriched him." What magnificent spirits were Zaccheus, and Barnabas the Levite, and Joseph of Arimathea. Would God that modern Christians might be compared with these noble Hebrews! Would they were, at least, able to say with the Pharisee, whose character they so much despise — "I pay tithes of all I possess." Alas! this is too often the chief point in the Pharisee's conduct, that is practically eschewed.

Are we then to imagine that there is nothing in the Christian system, corresponding to this high moral discipline of the Jew? Is the dispensation of faith marked by no great feature that subjects things temporal to the law of practical confidence in God? Are we whose circumcision is that of the heart; who are not our own; who are bought with a price; who have renounced the world, and who are called to set our affections on things above; are we released from all obligations to subordinate our industry, our capital, our increase, to the glory of God, and to cleanse, and sanctify our wealth, that it may be safely enjoyed? The Christian religion is indeed a law of liberty. It appeals to our reason, our conscience, and our affections, and leaves to love to wards God and man, the fulfilling of the law. Instead of prescribing minute

rules, concerning the tithe of mint and anise and cummin, it teaches us to exercise ourselves with respect to judgment, mercy and truth: but so much the more imperative does it make our responsibility to see that the freedom of the Gospel shall bear fruit to GOD'S glory, at least as largely as did the bondage of the Law.

Let us observe then that Baptism is the Christian Circumcision, and as such the token of our personal subjection to the law of CHRIST. I am not saying that this is the whole of baptism; but I am repeating the assertion of the Apostle that it is such, at least in part. Now to what corresponding distinctions of clean and unclean, with respect to things of the earth, does it bind us? Not to a distinction of meats, and drinks; not to a distinction between human beings, as if any man were common or unclean: but still the text implies a law of purifying. The Pharisees marvelled that JESUS ate with unwashen hands—that is, that He had not cleansed them ceremonially, before sitting down to meat. His answer was given in the language of the text. The law of His kingdom is a general one, and fitted to the whole world. It addresses itself to every man's conscience in the sight of GOD. It is no longer washing cups and platters, and circum-

cising trees: but the moral application of this ceremonial to all temporal things. All God's gifts are to be cleansed, circumcised, sanctified, and fitted for use, by sharing them with the poor. Before eating, it is not necessary that we should dip our fingers in water; but we have already cleansed our hands, and purified our meats, if we have dealt our bread to the hungry, and dedicated our tithes to the table of the Lord. "Every creature of GOD is good," says St. Paul, who had once been a Pharisee, thinking very differently, "and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." But what is thanksgiving? Is it a gesture, or pious grimace? Is it a mere look towards heaven; or does it consist of words only? Thanksgiving, our Saviour teaches us, in the text, to interpret as alms-giving: there is no gratitude where there is no sacrifice; for so we come to the law from the Master's own mouth—*But rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you.*

Such is the secret of sanctified wealth: or, in other words, here is the only principle, on which a Christian can be a prosperous or wealthy man, with safety to his soul. Here is the difference between clean increase, and filthy lucre, or sordid gain. It is the difference be-

tween the unpruned luxuriance of the wild vine, that runs to waste, and the rich and beautiful fruitage of the vineyard, that has been freely bled by the knife, and trimmed, and cut away, and that now yields abundantly to the wise and bountiful owner, and gives him enough for himself, and for those who crave from him a portion, in the name of the Lord.

Look now for a moment at sordid gain, or wealth unsanctified! I am not now speaking of the extortioner's blood-stained heap, nor of the miser's cursed hoard. I am not referring to riches got by wrong and robbery, nor to gold and silver coined from the tears of widows and of orphans. All that is another thing. I speak now of honourable, but unblest prosperity; of the rewards of industry and enterprise, gathering increase honestly. It may be all this, and yet be filthy lucre, or sordid gain, none the less. There it lies, a great pile of selfishness. It has mounted up, in gross accumulation, uncircumcised, uncleansed. It is filthy, because it is defiled by one great sin, which infects it all. God has been robbed, and the portion that justly belongs to Him, lies there, cankering and corroding all the rest. It has never been purified by thanksgiving—that is, by almsgiving, by tithes and offerings. The

man is a steward, but has put GOD's talents entirely to his own use. It has gone into his own heap. How could he more effectually bury it in the earth? Behold such a Christian's treasure! All that GOD has said in Scripture of the "root of all evil;" all that He tells us of the deceitfulness of riches; all the fearful warnings He has given us, against taking one's portion in this present world; all this is descriptive of such a possession. There is no disguising it: it curses body and soul; lies heavy on life, and crushes in death. One had better be a beggar like Lazarus, than to be rich like Dives. Such wealth is a terrible misfortune. What will it avail when death comes? And it often hastens death. "It taketh away the life of the owners thereof." And after that the Judgment! "Give an account of thy stewardship." Oh then! what then?

Now it is no man's interest to shut his eyes to these facts. Nay, it is the part of the truest friendship to direct not only every wealthy but every active, every young, every industrious man's attention, to the awful truth, that the accumulation of property is one of the most dangerous portions to which a man can be called in this present life. In what fearful terms, over and over again, does Scripture as-

sert this! "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of GOD!" When our Lord, Himself, thus foretold a secret of the day of judgment, He excited astonishment in His disciples. His words and His manner seem to have made them hold their breath; but He did not explain his words away. He added, indeed, that He referred to those who "trust in riches," but He went on to increase the impression he had made, by implying that such trust, or practical idolatry of wealth, is the general characteristic of the rich; for He concluded by a still stronger expression, and one which, if I had riches, I should wish to see daily before my eyes, in staring capitals, alike in my place of business, and in my closet: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Nor is this all. When the frightened disciples exclaimed, "who then can be saved"—He answered "all things are possible with GOD:" as much as to say, a rich man may be saved—may love GOD more than mammon: Grace can do it; but 'tis a wonderful work of GOD. Is it not true kindness, then, to repeat these memorable truths to those on whom GOD has laid the tremendous accountability of such a condition in life? What sort of a priest

would he be who should conceal them from them, and help them to explain them away? Who but the wretched Levite that smoothed Micah's road to idolatry, could thus serve Mammon in the name of GOD? Oh if there is such a thing as true prosperity; sanctified riches; durable treasure: wealth for two worlds; has not the poor rich-man a right to know it, and to be taught, while he may yet profit by the lesson, how to grow rich towards GOD, and to lay up treasures in heaven!

The text then should be regarded as the great law of the Gospel, as to "so passing through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal." All God's gifts are blessings, even those which grow from the root of all evil, if they be made clean to us, as the Hebrews' trees were circumcised, before they were used. The question arises, can this law be regarded as complied with, by anything less than systematic almsgiving? Are we to imagine that a few shillings thrown into a beggar's hat, or a few dollars cast into the basin at the offertory, are a true circumcision of such wealth, as is counted by tens and hundreds of thousands, and that compounds itself in a geometrical ratio? Is filthy lucre washed so easily? Is sordid gain so quickly purified? Take the

Hebrew's law of tithes and offerings: has the Christian any reason to suppose that God's "unspeakable gift" calls for less gratitude from him? Or, take another test: can we imagine that discipline and self-denial are less to be expected of us, who are called to take up our cross, daily? And can we convince ourselves that we may safely offer to God, that which costs us nothing? Nay, that we may put Him off with much less than we annually throw away on superfluities? Is God to be mocked with less than we spend on wines, on entertainments, on toys and trinkets, on mere show and sense? Oh, to think of it! All we have and are is His bounty; all CHRIST'S mercy; all bought with His blood; and yet we lay upon the Lord's table, habitually—how much? What proportion does it bear to the cost which we freely lavish upon our own tables?

I beg you to search the Scriptures, then, and see whether the New Testament, as well as the Old, does not exact of the faithful, a large and a systematic tribute to the Lord? In expounding this law of CHRIST to the Corinthians, St. Paul says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Now, explain this as you will, there remain three principles in it

which cannot be set aside. There is, first of all, a sanctifying of the Lord's day by almsgiving. Second, there is no exception to the Law, in favor even of the poor widow with her two mites; but every one, all believers, must provide an offering. Third, it is to be proportioned to God's bounties. It must be no haphazard contribution, but a fair, conscientious representation to GOD of what He has given. There is, indeed, no exaction of so much or so little; but, in harmony with the law of CHRIST, it is left to every man's conscience, as he shall answer at the last. Yet if he undertakes to offer, let him think what he is doing, and remember Ananias and Sapphira! "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?" Is that piece of silver your fair proportion? Does it represent your estate? Is that mite of gold an honest token of what GOD has done for you? Would you tell that to men? Do you presume to tell it to your Maker? Beware of the possible consequence, if so be "thou hast not lied unto men but unto GOD." Brethren, the world is looking to you for the Gospel, and the poor cry to you for bread. GOD has ordained that it should be so. You will be judged by your works. "Be ye warmed and filled," will not do! Ye must "give

alms of such things as ye possess;" and that, on system, as the fruit of self-denial, and as unto the Lord, and not to men! Not feelings and impulses merely, but principle must be enlisted. New habits must be created. There needs to be an entire practical reform throughout the Church, in this matter, not so much for the sake of the gifts, as for the salvation of the givers. If the Scriptures were not written to make us "wise unto salvation," then might we flatter ourselves that the present prevailing worldliness, extravagance, and waste, of professed Christians, is consistent with the hope of heaven. But, even then, we could scarcely imagine that he who offers his God and Saviour less, every year, than he devotes to his palate, and to his most artificial indulgences, is the man who is laying up treasures in heaven, and who is to be addressed in the great day of account, in the words, "well done, good and faithful servant."

Yes, brethren, I urge these things for your sakes, lest ye should be found empty in that day. If, on reflection, you are convinced that I have sounded a vain alarm: be it so! You will confess that my Master is the author of the alarm which seems to you so idle, for in all I have uttered, I have simply repeated and

enforced His words. But, if your conscience tells you that I speak the truth, and have discharged my duty, oh! reject not a conviction which the Spirit has produced, and which, if you will follow it out, from henceforth, will make you so rich in this world, and so immeasurably wealthy in the world to come! "God loveth a cheerful giver"—yes, and who does not? How large a use of wealth he has, who sees it, everywhere conciliating love, enriching others and endearing himself to them, and glorifying God! How such a stewardship opens the heart, and exalts the whole life! How it returns into one's own bosom, with a happiness and peace that the world can neither give nor take away! How it ennobles the very face, and makes a man look like a child of God! Contrast the miser and his hoard with the bounteous Christian, who sees his wealth in the smile of widows and of orphans; who hears it in the bells that call the multitude to keep holy day; and who makes it work his reward even while he lieth sick upon his bed, in speeding the publisher of salvation to heathen lands, and rearing the parish church, the school-house, and the college, among the rude and needy population of our western wilds! Above all, contrast the hollow heart, and haggard conscience, and the

blank misgivings of the one, with the contentment, and faith, and hope of the other. Or, compare with the true Christian, who recognizes and discharges these duties to GOD and to man, the man who lives only for self, and whose condition is described in three Scriptural comments; whose god is his belly, whose end is destruction, and who glories in his shame!

When I look at the kingdoms of this world, and see how they can enlist their subjects, and exact their tribute, I am confounded to look again at the kingdom of CHRIST, and to see how His soldiers slumber, and how its servants waste the talents committed to their trust. Look at the world's example. An empire undertakes a war, and millions are poured into its treasury, without grudging; aye, and thousands, peers and peasants, crowd the ranks as volunteers, and shed their blood, and die in ditches, with a spirit that sustains them without murmuring, to the last gasp. And all for what? What reward do they promise themselves for such prodigality of all that they have and are? A little earth to cover them; that's all, if they get that! But oh! the Captain of our salvation is carrying on a war, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Its

object is the enlightening of nations; the consolation of mourning millions; the rescue of a dying world; the overthrow of its abounding sin and misery, and the gathering of all mankind into the fold of their Redeemer. The enemy is Satan, and his hosts of darkness; the victory is sure; its rewards are eternal, and every soldier, fall when he may, has secured immortality and heaven. And all this we profess to believe; and we are called to be soldiers of CHRIST; and, unless we forswear our baptism, such we profess to be. And yet, who serves? Or, who sits down and counts the cost of the war, and says—"So much I must give to carry it on?" Who offers self, or son, or brother, to the army? Where is the Christian chivalry that recognizes something dearer than life in the Master's honour? One sees worldly heroes, who have lost limbs in battle; but who, for CHRIST, cuts off the right hand, or plucks out the right eye? Thank God, a few! Look at your missionaries! That gallant band in Africa has fought Satan in the stronghold, and their ranks have been thinned by his hottest fire. They have suffered loss of all things; but they have planted the cross successfully, where CHRIST was not named before, and generations yet unborn shall bless them. I might

say almost as much of others, noble soldiers of CHRIST, at home and abroad. And what are we doing to sustain them, to comfort them, to reinforce them? When our army was in Mexico, did any one grudge them the millions they required to feed and clothe them? And is our religion so much meaner than our patriotism? Is it less our duty to render unto GOD the things that are GOD'S? For it is not of gifts that I speak, but of debt. "How much *owest* thou unto my lord?" To-day we begin a new year. Have years of past mercies left no obligations? Dare we enter upon another, which may be our last, without a deeper sense of dependence, and hence of duty? Do we not feel that the days of our stewardship are becoming few, and that what remains to be done must be done with our might? Oh for that true circumcision of the spirit, which is the first prayer of the Church in beginning a year! Oh for grace to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again! Oh for wisdom to reckon aright, and betimes, that problem He has given us—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

SERMON XII.

THE GREAT MISSIONARY.

EPIPHANY.

AS LONG AS I AM IN THE WORLD, I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.
St. John, ix. 5.

WHEN those Eastern sages came to Bethlehem, and were admitted to the sight of their incarnate GOD, they not only attested their personal interest in His advent, but also illustrated its nature, as the foundation of an universal empire. The Jews received a sign, in that event, of the fulfilment of the promises made unto their father Abraham, that, in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Their existence, as a people, was based on this promise of universal redemption; they had been chosen as vessels of election, and honoured as instruments of mercy to mankind. They were the trustees, and not the monopolists of grace. The original promise, concerning

“the seed of the woman,” had taken shape, more definitely in the promise to Abraham; had been further restricted to Jacob; had passed to Judah and settled in David, and his posterity; and finally had become personal to the Blessed Virgin; but while the promised seed was thus identified with CHRIST, the promise itself was never altered. It was always a promise in which all mankind were equally interested. It was, indeed, “to the Jew first,” but it was “also to the Gentile.” Nor were the Jews pardonable for their narrowness concerning this promise. Their fathers, and their prophets, had recorded over and over again, not only the universality of Messiah’s empire, but their exultation in the fact, that they were the honoured instrumentality of His benevolence to all the world. That the government of the Universe should rest on the shoulder of the Son of David, was glory enough for his kinsmen according to the flesh. So the prophets thought, and so they said with rapture. Their father Jacob had prophesied,—“the sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come,” but he had not forgotten to add—“and unto Him shall *the gathering of the people* be.” So too they had in the Pentateuch, the memorable prophecy of Balaam;—“a Star

shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel . . . out of Jacob *shall He come that shall have dominion.*" This is the prophecy which is supposed to have been kept among the Eastern nations until the Star of Bethlehem appeared. When the Magi saw it, they knew the time had come : and when they arrived in Jerusalem, and presented themselves at the court of Herod, the Jews received full notice that Shiloh had come ; that Judah's sceptre was henceforth to be one of universal dominion, and that the gathering of the nations was already begun, in this early pilgrimage to His presence. And, surely, it is a delightful thought, that the venerable pilgrims themselves must have understood something of the import and nature of their own errand, even if the Jews were blinded to the great realities of which it was the indication. Their story is, indeed, but short and simple. They come and go, with little more than the announcement of the fact ; but oh, how much is implied in their obedience and faith. They perform the blessed offices for which they came : they evade the treacherous injunctions of Herod ; they depart unto their own country another way. Moreover, God reveals to them their duty, with respect to Herod, in a dream, or vision, favouring

them, as he did, commonly, inspired prophets only. Is not all this indicative of their intelligent piety? Yes, ye unknown, but reverend confessors of the world's Redeemer; ye that come earliest to His feet from among the Gentiles; refreshing, indeed, is the thought, that we may yet enjoy your society, in the presence of the same dear Lord, when, as ye, from the East, so we also, from the West, shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

It was not by chance, then, nor as a mere incident, that these Gentiles came to "the brightness of His rising." The Epiphany is justly regarded as, in some degree, the birthday of the Gentile Church, and as, more especially, a token and pledge of the ultimate conversion of all nations. But the event itself was also a remarkable testimony to the entire success of those wise providences by which the world had been prepared to receive the Great Missionary; and to the fact that the mission of CHRIST was a mission to the world.

I know that, to the superficial reader of the Evangelists; the life of CHRIST may seem to have been widely different from that of a Missionary to the world. His own words, "I am not sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," might be instanced in proof of the local and

limited nature of His mission. In fact, it might be urged, that, for thirty years, he lived in obscurity, as a private person, fulfilling the humble lot of a Galilæan peasant; while the three years which He lived in public were passed among the Jews exclusively. How then are we to understand His repeated assertion of the claim set forth in the text, *as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world?*

In reply, I would merely call attention to the fact, that His personal ministry, among the covenant people, was as necessary to the world as to them; while, even among them, His work was a general one, and was never limited by their narrow and exclusive feelings. Thus St. Paul expounds his twofold relations to Jew and Gentile, in the words—"Now I say that JESUS CHRIST was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of GOD, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and *that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy*, as it is written, for this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles." Here His whole ministry among the Jews, is declared to be, through them, a mission to the Gentiles. Such it was, not only by virtue of the fact, that He was, all the time, training and instructing the Apostles, for their

universal labours, but also because He was fulfilling a priesthood, which had the whole world for its object; and to which He had, providentially, attracted the attention of the whole world, while He had also prepared the world to accept its benefits. This is the point to which I would now direct your attention, as illustrating the character of CHRIST, as the Light of the world; and as establishing the fact that His Church exists in the world only to carry out His own plans of universal mercy.

The Star of Bethlehem was a token to mankind that the Light of the world had come. It said to the nations, precisely what the text says, "so long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." It called the whole world to behold Him, and to recognize Him as the Sun of Righteousness, and the Desire of Nations. And observe, that, as I said, He had beforehand prepared the world for such a call, and enabled mankind to identify Him as the Great Missionary from heaven to earth. Of this fact, every school-boy has evidence before him in his Horace and Virgil. "To whom shall the Father give the task of expiating sin? Oh come at last we pray thee, veiling thy splendours in a cloud, thou prophet and Day-star." Such is one of Horace's embodiments

of the great and general expectation of his times; and his friend Virgil, in a yet more striking manner, has gathered up, and given shape to the universal groanings of Creation for a Redeemer, in a poem which runs almost parallel with Isaiah's prophecies, throughout. Indeed, it is so full of fragmentary Scripture, that a Christian almost scruples to call it a pagan production. Only think of the eve of the Advent being celebrated by a heathen, in such language as this:—

Now comes the era of the prophet's song ;
 Begins afresh a grand career of ages,
 And, with the Virgin, paradise returns :
 Now the new birth descends from highest heaven !
 Hail, to the child, in whom the iron age,
 Complete, at length, beholds the golden come ;
 Hail, to the world's great Sun ; at last He reigns,
 And, from this day, the mighty months proceed.
 Henceforth, the remnants of primeval sin,
 In every vestige purged away, shall free
 The nations from their long perpetual fear ;
 While he, on earth, the life divine shall lead,
 All heaven beholding, heaven with men conjoined,
 And in His Father's might shall rule the world !

Now, it is true, that, in rudely versifying this noble monument of heathen literature, I have taken some liberties; yet so slight they are, that although it may scarcely be credited

except by those who are familiar with the original, I venture to say I have given a fair version of it, and that such were Virgil's yearnings towards his Redeemer. True "the unknown God" whom he thus "ignorantly worships," receives in his song, the name of Apollo, the idol god of Light; but as he knew no better sun, why should we therefore fail to recognize, in it, his longings for the light and warmth of the great Sun of Righteousness? Nor are they his individual longings only, for, as I have said, he only professed to give utterance to the hopes and expectations of his times. The inquiry arises—whence these expectations? How had men been led to look for a great Deliverer, just at that period? How came, into their minds, such notions of incarnate divinity? Of primeval guilt? Of atonement for sin? Of a new and glorious era, and of universal peace and blessedness among men? The Christian answers, because the way of the Great Missionary had been prepared by God's own providence. All this was ordered beforehand, that what should be done, in Jewry, might not be done in a corner: and that "so long as He was in the World, CHRIST Himself might be the Light of the world."

And now, let us observe, how it was brought

about, that CHRIST was no sooner born King of the Jews, than He was also manifested to Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, as their King. In other words let us see how emphatically CHRIST'S mission was a mission to all mankind, in its nature, and in its reality, and that from the very beginning. At the moment of the Nativity, Japhet was "dwelling in the tents of Shem;" the Romans had possession of Palestine. To the Gentiles of Europe then, CHRIST was manifested as soon as to the Jews. He was born in Cæsar's empire, and according to Cæsar's edict, He was enrolled, as soon as born, in the city of David, as the son of Joseph and Mary, and the lineal descendant and heir of David himself. Hardly was this done, when the Gentiles of Asia came to salute him, bringing the productions of their soil as tribute, and acknowledging His rightful dominion over them. Moreover, when He had been recognized by the prophet Simeon as "a light to lighten the Gentiles," He takes occasion, by the unbelief of Herod, and the virtual rejection which He had already experienced from the Jews, to manifest himself to the Gentiles, more directly. He no longer waits for the world to come to His light; He Himself carries it to the dark places of the world. Like His father Jacob,

He goes down into Egypt, and is manifested last of all, to the sons of Ham; as if to give us a cheering prophecy, that last of all, but without fail, Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God. CHRIST Himself was the first missionary to Africa; and though very little is told us of that mysterious visit to a foreign country; and though Art has disguised it to us as a "Repose" in the shadow of the pyramids—who knows what those two years of the Lord's personal sojourning among a people that "walked in darkness," may have accomplished for some of their souls? True, He was but a babe, but He had expounders and interpreters, in Joseph and the Virgin. Bishop Taylor, according to his rich oriental vein of thought, rejoices in associating with this visit, that prophecy of Isaiah:—"The Lord shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." He also relates a tradition that while they sojourned in the Thebaid, the idols were dashed down in the pagan temples, like Dagon before the Ark. And who knows, but the Ethiopian, whom Philip baptized, and who seems to have become the Evangelist of his countrymen, made his visit to Jerusalem, and became a proselyte

Jew, and then a Christian, as the result of that mysterious portion of our Saviour's mission which fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea, "out of Egypt have I called my Son?"

At all events, we cannot believe it was for naught that the Great Missionary followed the path of the ancient Israel, and went into the house of bondage, and there dwelt, in the flesh, where He had dwelt of old, in Spirit, when all the children of Israel had "light in their dwellings." We may, at least, see in His return, and in the application to him, personally, of Hosea's prophecy, a challenge to compare the typical progress of the ark, through the wilderness, with the final manifestation of CHRIST, and to trace the chain of events, from the day of the passover in Egypt, to the day of the manifestation of the Lamb of God, in Jewry, as one history, having one single end in view, and that the enlightening of the world, by the Dayspring from on high. Now, if we honour this challenge, we shall find that not an event connected with the history of God's people had been lost to this great object. The overthrow of Pharaoh was a marvellous shock to the superstitions of the nations, among which Egypt was then the queen. The prophecy of Balaam found its way to the whole Orient be-

cause of the passage of the ark through Arabia. The conquest of Canaan was another blow to idols. Even the lapse of the Hebrews into idolatry, and their captivity, was overruled to a similar purpose; for Nebuchadnezzar was but another Pharaoh, and Babylon another Egypt; and the proclamation which he was led to make against idolatry, after his vision of the Son of God, in the fiery furnace, together with the subsequent proclamation of Darius, in favour of the God of Daniel, were most important links in the chain of events which led the wise men to Bethlehem. It is an extraordinary fact of history, moreover, that, in their successive times, such potentates as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and Augustus, were led to do public homage to the Lord God of Israel; such as turned the eyes of the nations to Jerusalem, and made the name of the true God to be known and feared, from the east to the west. The testimony of profane history is unequivocal, as to the fact that the appearance of a universal Sovereign, who should arise out of Jacob, was the general expectation of mankind when the Saviour was manifested. God had "shaken all nations," to prepare his way, and then, at the moment of an

extraordinary and universal peace, “the Desire of all nations” came.

The sophist Gibbon, in the “five reasons” which he assigns, to account for the rapid spread of the Gospel, has taken incredible pains to show that, just at the moment when the light of the world appeared, all things were singularly predisposed to its reception. This he stupidly urges as an argument against its marvellous and miraculous diffusion; whereas, it gloriously attests both the wisdom and the power of God, in carrying out His plans of mercy to the world. In a word, the infidel historian, unwittingly, and with immense labour, has proved how completely that prophecy was fulfilled, which saith:—“every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”

From the moment of our Saviour’s birth, then, when it was announced by angels as glad tidings of great joy *to all people*, down to the moment of His departure into glory, when He said, “go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” He fulfilled the office, personally, of the Great Missionary. “He

came to seek and to save that which was lost." And how did He fulfil this mission? In season and out of season, as a prophet and as a priest, as the good physician of body and soul, on the Mount and upon the Cross, for Jews and for Samaritans, behold Him always "working the works of Him that sent Him," and always connecting His works for individuals, with lessons for all mankind. Thus, the text is an exposition of His purpose in giving light to one born blind. It was a sign of His great errand to enlighten the spiritually blind. He declares this work of illumination the whole object of His life in the world. *So long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.* And He goes on to forewarn the Jews not only of His purpose to evangelize the heathen, but also of the removal of their own candlestick. "For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind." He was all the time effecting, among those who saw His personal ministry, that grafting-in of the Gentiles, into the root and fatness of the olive-tree, which was to be "the riches of the world."

But here the inquiry rises, as to the force of the words—*So long as I am in the world.* Is He "the light of the world" no longer? God

forbid! The force of the text is rather, this:—so long as I am in the world, my personal ministry, as *the light of the world*, is the world's sole dependence; therefore, every creature has a claim on me personally, and I must do the works of my Father, in ministering to them, according as they need. What then? His personal ministry has been succeeded by the more general ministry of the Holy Ghost. As the Father sent the Son, so He has sent His Apostles and evangelists. He is still the light of the world, but His personal preaching, and healing, and enlightening, are no more the world's dependence. He has multiplied His hands, His feet, His tongue, His words, His mercies, through the Church, which is His body, in which every individual member has an office, in ministering His mercy. What follows? "We are debtors," brethren, "both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise." The Gospel which we possess is the world's Gospel. If CHRIST is the Great Missionary, whom the world has been taught to expect, and to whom all men are called to look, we Christians are bound to manifest Him to all men. In His own language—"Ye are the light of the world. . . Let your light so shine before men, that they

may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”

How nobly the primitive Church fulfilled this mission, in the Spirit of her Lord, the records of the world itself demonstrate. There was no grudging; no holding back; no debate where to begin, and what to do first. There was no stopping to ask what might possibly be done with heathen, if they should die in their darkness. Enough for that little flock that they were the light of the world. CHRIST had enlightened them, and had laid on them the duty of enlightening others. They saw the Prince of Darkness enthroned above the kingdoms of the earth, and their commission was to depose him, that the Prince of Light might reign in his stead. So then the Apostles parted at Jerusalem, to meet again only in the Jerusalem which is above. North, south, east, west, they sought their crown of martyrdom, whilst they preached CHRIST crucified. And oh, how mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed! Everywhere the Lord wrought with them and confirmed His word. It is almost incredible, how soon they had borne the testimony of JESUS through all the accessible regions of the earth, from Britain to India. Everywhere the idols were moved, and dark-

ness fled, before the presence of the manifested Gospel. Bel bowed down, and Nebo stooped; and miserable nations who had groaned in the bondage of Satan, began to walk in the light of the truth, and to rejoice in CHRIST with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, I desire to ask whether any one who pretends to be a Christian, and who owes his own knowledge of the Gospel to the missionary spirit of better days, can have any excuse for doubting that the very idea of the Gospel, is that of a mission to the world? Is not CHRIST the Great Missionary? Does not His Church exist, in order to be His agent in evangelizing the world? Is she not now the light of the world? Did CHRIST light her candle that she might put it under a bushel? Is it not the personal duty of every Christian to copy CHRIST in working while it is to-day, and so to let his light shine before men? Is it not written, "even as He is so are we in this world?" Can this be true, unless "the Spirit of CHRIST dwell in us richly and abound, so that we be not barren nor unfruitful?" Is not CHRIST'S Spirit a missionary Spirit; a Spirit everywhere at war with darkness, and with the power of Satan? And is it not written again—"If any man

have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of His?"

I do not speak of a missionary spirit, then, as something which a Christian may, or may not have. I cannot conceive of a Christian, who has anything better than the most feeble powers of mind, or the merest glimmer of grace in the soul, who can fail to share in his Saviour's ardent desire "to seek and to save that which is lost." To take up a map of the globe, and to see the dark places of the earth, where CHRIST'S name has yet to be heard for the first time, and where souls still are born and die, slaves to the devil, doing his works, worshipping him, and groaning under his bondage—oh, is it not enough to make a Christian tremble that such darkness should be, while he has light enough and to spare? And yet I do believe there are persons who flatter themselves that they are Christians, and on their way to glory, who scarcely give a thought to these things, from one year to another of their utterly selfish and unprofitable lives. If Christians were all like these, how long would it take Satan's missionaries to overthrow the Church, and win back the whole world to the prince of darkness?

I know there are some who profess to have

scruples about sending missions to the heathen, while we have so many heathen at home. It is a scruple which generally is most lively in those who do as little for home, as for abroad : and it is unworthy of any one who owes his own evangelization to a more liberal policy. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" "We are debtors," brethren! Freely we have received, freely we must give! From the day when those eleven Galilæans came down from the mount of Olives, and undertook to destroy the works of the devil, and to regenerate the world by preaching the doctrine of the Crucified, the successful plan of operations has always been to multiply the centres of light, and to let the moles and the bats grope and fly nowhere, in darkness, undisturbed. To preach the Gospel "where CHRIST was not named before" was St. Paul's policy, and he endeavoured, so far as possible, "not to build on another man's foundation." The light of which the Apostles were the depositories was *the light of the world*, and as such they gave it a world-wide diffusion. Wherever there was an open door, there they entered in: wherever there was a cry "come over and help us," they went and helped them. With them, as with their Lord, there was no distinction of home-born,

or alien, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but all men were neighbours and brethren, who needed a good Samaritan to bind up their wounds and to take care of them. So be it, then, with us! We shall flourish best at home, when we do most abroad, and certain it is, we shall not do, anywhere, too much.

But there is one more objection which ought to be met. It is said—"after all, so little is done." I never knew this said by any one who did not himself take care to keep it little, so far as his personal sacrifices were concerned. But the contrary is the case. I am astonished at the vast amount which has been accomplished, by the providence of God, in answer to prayer, during my own short experience of life. Apart from all that has been done by the noble missionaries to whom we so coolly assign the high places of the field, and that is very considerable, I am amazed to see what God has done, by His own mighty hand, to "make His way known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations." Lo! what a highway the sea has become, within a few years. What stations, and storehouses, of light, He has established throughout the world. What advanced posts are already occupied in the enemies' land! What nations have been born in a day, as if on

purpose to break up the strongholds of heathenism! In all this, I see an answer to prayer. I adore and worship the wisdom and power of GOD, in subordinating the mammon-worship and cupidity of men, to His own purposes. Just as Rome's military roads were all prepared to give free course to the Gospel at first, so now the world's steam and electricity are made the Gibeonites of "this latter house;" "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to the Church of the latter day. Prayer has done this, and prayer and labour will subject it, more and more, to the service of CHRIST. I believe that GOD intends to make a short work with what remains to be done. In the opinion of many of our wisest contemporaries, the signs of the times all indicate this probability. A new and rapid developement is promised of that "little stone," which has become a great mountain, and which is to fill the whole earth. The relics of the old empires are fast becoming powder before it. Things are not to go on as they have done. Soon, there will be no more Rome with her pestilent pope: the churches of Europe will be emancipated and purified, and all the sooner, because he waxes worse and worse. Let him "fill up the measure of his iniquity," and let Babylon fall! Yea, Lord,

how long? In some sudden moment, too, the Jews will behold the light, like Saul of Tarsus; there will fall from their eyes as it were scales; and everywhere will resound from their tongues hosannas to the Son of David. What then? Let St. Paul reply. "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Brethren, if we should not live to see it, our children, in all probability, will. Ours the war, and theirs the peace. Ours the labour, the patience, and the prayer, and theirs the blessedness to see, with their eyes, more than we dare to hope. Soon church-bells will ring in Constantinople, and there will be no more Turks in Turkey. The day is not far off when Buddhism shall no longer be the religion of China, nor Brahminism the religion of India. In the next generation there will be native bishops among the Hindoos; and then among the people of Tartary and Thibet, and far in the interior of Africa, as well as of Asia. In short I believe there is a good time coming, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." And more, I am sure that the doing of all this, rests in some measure, upon you and me. It is CHRIST'S ordinance to work by means, and to

do great things by instruments which the world despises; yea, and by "things which are not, to bring to naught things that are." Even so, it appears to me this latter-day glory is coming "without observation;" without much to attract the world's attention beforehand; but not without much of prayer and effort, and patient waiting upon the Lord, on the part of His saints. As for those Christians who neither pray, nor pay, for the spread of the Gospel, God has told us of their reward. Go read what He does with the salt that has lost its savour! He salts the world, and lights the world with materials of another kind, and He disposes of the refuse material in another way. Meantime, if we be the light of the world, how great our encouragement to let our light shine. We must hope against hope, and be content to go round Jericho, time after time, with no sign of a single breach in her mighty walls, but the seventh time, these walls will fall flat. And every circuit beforehand, though it may seem unavailing, is accomplishing the end. The Gospel will subdue the world, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Finally, let us deeply feel that the grand obstacle, at this moment, to an effective assault is upon heathenism, the divisions among

Christians. The accursed spirit of sect, this it is which wastes our strength, and sets brother against brother, and delays the conversion of the world, and does the devil's work, more than any other thing. CHRIST'S promises are made to a united Church. "That they all *may be one*, that the world may believe." Oh that GOD would open the eyes of all who "love the Lord JESUS CHRIST, in sincerity," to the iniquity of those carnal divisions which exist among us, and move all faithful and true hearts, to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel." As for us, who have received, by GOD'S grace, the great deposit of Apostolic doctrine, not for ourselves, but for the world, let us learn to "speak the truth in love," and to put away those offensive boastings which serve only to make the good things we hold in trust, distasteful to those who need them. And may GOD reunite all who love His kingdom, in one Holy and Apostolic host, that so, warring no more with one another, but only against sin, Satan and death, we may fight a good fight, and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

SERMON XIII.

THE SON OF MARY IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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.

THE fictions of the middle ages have preserved a striking truth, in a corrupt form, when they represent St. Luke as a painter. His pencil is the pen of inspiration, and his colours the glowing words which the Holy Ghost teacheth; but who that follows the glorious Evangelist in his narrative, can forbear to acknowledge that he rather sees than reads the life of the manifested God? Scene after scene, all his characters, and all their accessories, live and move before us. There is no human story so full of pictures, yet the words are few, and such as come naturally,

and are read without effort; and always the prominent and central figure, around whom all is grouped, is the Son of Mary in His meekness and His lowliness, His majesty and His love. Such is the consummate work of GOD Himself, in winning man's heart to wisdom. He has condescended to render the tidings of salvation as delicious to our mental appetite, as He has made the fruit of the earth to our taste. The man who refuses to know and love the Saviour, as exhibited in the Gospel, is a rebel to his own best impulses, and does violence to the tenderest instincts of humanity.

The Epiphanies, or manifestations of the Incarnate GOD to His creatures, were as many as were His works of wisdom and mercy, but that early one which is presented to us, this day, in the Gospel, is peculiarly attractive and important. It fills up the time between the visit of the wise men to the Royal Babe of Bethlehem, and His public manifestation, as our Great High Priest, at his baptism. Thus we are introduced to the infant as king, to the child as prophet, and to the man CHRIST JESUS as the anointed priest. But this one glimpse of the childhood of the Son of Mary has a fascination for the devout mind, entirely its own. It appeals to our affections. It presents us with a view of

our Saviour, which charms the intelligence, while it fills the heart. It assures us, moreover, that the life of CHRIST was a harmony throughout, and corresponded entirely with His own prophetic description of Himself, in the Psalms: "Lo, I come! in the volume of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will. . . I am content to do it; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Behold, then, the holy JESUS, now twelve years of age, as He is found in the temple, amid its Rabbis and Gamaliels, both hearing them and asking them questions. He has been brought up to Jerusalem, by Joseph, and His blessed Mother, to keep the Paschal feast with other Hebrew children; but three days after all the other pilgrims, young and old, have returned to their homes, He still lingers in the house of God, and clings to the skirts of those venerable men, who sit there to expound the law. The holy child has recognized the house of His true Father, and instead of a visiter He becomes an inhabitant. Like the Psalmist's sparrow, He finds His nest close by the altar. He is at home in the temple, and day after day, as He mingles with the doctors, they are "astonished at His understanding and answers!" They lift their reverend hands in

wonder. "Whence," they say, "whence hath this child letters, having never learned?" Whence this marvellous betrayal of intelligence without conceit; of knowledge without display? How is it we hear the wisdom of the ancients, from the lips of rosy youth? Is this one of the children of the captivity? Is it the child Joseph, or Samuel, or Daniel, risen again? Or is it not rather some new consolation of Israel, who is all that these children were, and more besides? And yet—is not this the carpenter's son? Is He not the son of Joseph? And can any good come out of Nazareth?

While they thus reasoned among themselves, they may be supposed to have held in their hands the volume of the book in which it was written of Him—"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." I consider these words of the prophet, as the complement of the narrative of the Evangelist. They seem designed as the answer of CHRIST Himself, to the astonishment and curiosity of the doctors. They inquire—"whence this tongue of the learned," and

JESUS answers in these words of Isaiah. His wisdom and utterance are not human, but supernatural. His human nature is anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with His sevenfold gifts, and that without measure: and if He "grows in wisdom, and in favour with GOD," 'tis but as the sun grows bright from morning to noon; not by any increment of His personal glory, but by more and more manifesting Himself to man, and thus discharging the work which was given Him by the Father.

We may gather, then, from the text, something satisfactory concerning the childhood of JESUS: and, in several ways, we may use it for our instruction, in connection with the great subject of His manifestation, and His mission to mankind. But here it ought to be remarked that the whole chapter of which it is part, supports the view I have taken of it, as a direct prophecy of CHRIST, and of His relations to both Jew and Gentile. Nay, the entire argument of the prophet, in the context immediately preceding, is the Incarnation and ministry of Messiah. In the abrupt and impassioned forms of lyrical poetry, he introduces God the Father, as it were, consoling the Son of Mary, for the unwillingness of His own people to receive Him, and promising Him, in-

stead of the tribes of Jacob, the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Fired with this intimation of the vastness of the divine plan of salvation, the inspiration of Isaiah mounts to rapture. He foresees the ingathering of the nations, and is smitten with transport in view of the ultimate extension, and glory of the Israel of God. His soul bounds from earth to heaven, at the thought of the whole world converted to the faith of Abraham, and adoring the great Melchisedek. "Sing, oh heavens, and be joyful, oh earth, and burst forth into singing, oh mountains, for the Lord hath comforted His people." Then, by a transition, highly lyrical and almost dramatic, he supposes the carnal-minded Jew complaining, and as it were, grudging that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs. With such a recreant to the spirit of the Law, he introduces the Messiah, expostulating. 'Is it I,' says the King of the Jews, 'who have divorced your mother, the Jewish Church? Have I sold away my children? Or have not your own iniquities separated you from me, and deprived you of your precedence as the church of the first-born?' He adds, "wherefore, when I came was there no man; when I called was there none to answer?" Who but sees, in this, the

prophetic form of that which is written in the Gospel, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Now, the text immediately succeeds; and is a condensed exhibition of our Saviour's prophetic office, as was the former passage of His kingly character; while in the next verse there is a lyric transition to His priesthood and His sacrifice which cannot be mistaken: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

Here then let us dwell on the text, reversing its order, for its better illustration. In the concluding portion, we have, I suppose, an intimation, of that "favour with God," in which the holy child is described as growing. "He wakeneth, morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear, to hear as the learned." We must remember that the infancy and childhood of our Lord were entirely destitute of those circumstantial characteristics from which early proficiency and wisdom might naturally be expected. The reputed son of an humble labourer, He was, moreover, a Nazarene, and had been an exile in Egypt. Already, He was the scorn of men, and an outcast of the people: and the reputation of His class in society as altogether illiterate, may be gathered from a

subsequent exclamation of the populace—"how knoweth this man letters." But if the doctors were astonished, in like manner, the text might have informed them that such supernatural wisdom was to be a sign of their Messiah. His instructor had been His Father in heaven. The childhood of the prophet Samuel had been a type of CHRIST, in more respects than, in the bare coincidence of Hannah's song with Mary's *Magnificat*. Who has not read of the child who abode in the temple, by the ark of GOD, in the days of Eli? Who is not familiar with the story of the Lord's "awakening his ear to hear as the learned," and how the child answered, "speak Lord, for thy servant heareth?" Let the Rabbis know, then, from their own scriptures, that, as one day with the child Samuel, so, all the days of the child JESUS, were begun with a voice from heaven: "He wakeneth, morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." While those who knew Him only as the carpenter's son, regarded Him merely as an innocent and lovely child, He was thus realizing the hidden life of the ancient prophets. He lived, daily, as Enoch did, when he walked with God, or as Moses did upon the mount; or Elijah by the brook Cherith. The same GOD who is every-

where described, in His communications with these inferior prophets, as "rising up early and sending them," thus, morning by morning, wakened His own beloved Son; wakening His ear to hear as the learned; giving Him "meat to eat that they knew not of;" and enabling Him, the more fully to declare, "my doctrine is not mine but His that sent me." And so it was, that in due time God manifested His Son, while yet a child, to those who should have known Him, by this sign, as "that prophet that should come into the world." And not only so, for it was perhaps necessary that Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, should be thus reminded, of their true relation to the beloved child of their heart, who while obeying and serving them, in their poor cottage, was yet their strength and their Redeemer. Thus, at all events, was His holy mother prepared for the time when He should cease to obey her; when He should enter upon His Father's business, and look to her no more for commands and instructions. And we learn that Mary understood this first foretaste of her maternal sorrows: she "kept all these sayings in her heart;" she understood, as never before, how little He was hers, and how entirely He was the Son of GOD; in short—how "GOD, who in

times past spake unto the fathers by the prophets, had in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son."

So it was, then, that JESUS grew in wisdom, and that the Lord GOD gave unto Him the tongue of the learned. For we must reflect, further, that though perfect GOD, He was perfect man; and as man, He required instruction and growth in wisdom. His human soul could daily meditate, as man, on what He knew as GOD. There was no clashing, or confusion between the two natures of His one divine person: yet, at the same time He was in the bosom of the Father, as GOD, while as man He was subject to the law, and subject to His parents, and exercised Himself daily, in things divine, to prepare Himself for His ministry. Take then the words of the text, as a holy soliloquy, in which the blessed JESUS describes to Himself, His commerce with the skies, and the blessed purpose of His mission to the earth. "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned:" the Father hath endowed my human nature with the tongue of a skilful scribe, so "that I may speak a word in season to him that is weary." And compare with this assertion, the narrative of the Evangelists. Was not His tongue wonderfully eloquent, in

subjects requiring the knowledge and education of a Gamaliel? How often did the carpenter's son confound His enemies, with amazing knowledge, as well as wisdom! How often did He disarm the lawyer, using against him weapons from his own armory of the law! How often were scribes and doctors silenced by Him, with citations out of the prophets and the Pentateuch, in which they fancied themselves supremely learned. You remember also how He opened the Scriptures to the disciples, after He was risen from the dead; how their hearts burned within them; and how often, before, it had been testified concerning Him, "never man spake like this man." In all, no doubt it was the God, as well as the man that spoke; yet always, 'twas the "tongue of the learned," as well as the wisdom of the Most High; 'twas JESUS, the prophet of Israel.

But it remains to be noted, that the gracious purpose, for which our Saviour was thus prepared for His manifestation to Israel, was that He "should know how to speak a word in season to Him that is weary." How different the ends of human learning! How haughty is Science: how proud is Philosophy. With what disdain they turn from the poor, the suffering, the sorrowful, the dying, and cultivate the ap-

plause of prosperous men, and the favour of princes! But He, in whom are comprehended all wisdom, and all knowledge, takes a human body, and condescends to use a human tongue, and makes it the tongue of the learned, all for what? Oh the depth! 'Tis only that He may make Himself the friend of publicans and sinners; only that He may bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort the sorrowful; only that He may go out into highways and hedges, and bid the halt and the maimed to His marriage supper; only that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, as He did when He said—"Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And here, for a moment, let me magnify mine office, as a minister of CHRIST, by this amazing example of GOD'S dear Son. You know with what favour the world regards the achievements of science, and even its speculations and theories. You know how eagerly it pursues its novelties, and how sick it grows of the old, unaltered, and unalterable Gospel. And I allow that science is indeed sublime: it is a great thing to follow her in her pathway among the stars, or even to descend with her into caves beneath, exploring the secrets of

earth's dark chambers, and bringing treasures of darkness into light. But all these things, and infinitely more besides, were known familiarly to Him, who "was in the beginning," and "without whom was not anything made, that was made:" and yet, when He lived, as man with men, and when "the Lord GOD gave Him the tongue of the learned," was it nature that He undertook to expound? Was it astronomy, or geology, or even the philosophy of states and empires, that He assayed to teach mankind? Oh how much is implied in the fact, that leaving all these things to the "disputers of this world," as the merest trifles, comparatively, JESUS CHRIST, received from His Father, the tongue of the learned, only "that He should know how to speak a word to the weary." What does it argue if not this—that to preach the Gospel is the noblest work that can employ the faculties of man, or angel, or of GOD? What, but that parents should consecrate their offspring to the work to which GOD gave His only-begotten? What, but that the young man in CHRIST should aspire to this as the most worthy employment of life? What, but that to receive, and understand, and love the Gospel, is the great concern of the creature! What, but that forsaking all other

studies, all other learning, all other eloquence, we should, first of all things, hear the Son of Man, addressing us with the tongue of the learned, as weary and heavy-laden sinners, and saying, "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls?" It is, perhaps, scarcely worthy of remark, that as a man and a teacher, JESUS of Nazareth was, indeed, endowed with a tongue which was "the pen of a ready writer;" but, among His miracles, this, surely, should be noted, that, "having never learned," He nevertheless spake with surpassing power, and used words as their Lord and Creator. What human composition can be compared with His sermon on the mount: what language was ever so complete to its purpose, yet so condensed, and so simple as that of the Lord's prayer? And if human learning will enter the lists with the heavenly doctrine of CHRIST, I cannot but upbraid it with its comparative poverty, and bid it fall into its place, at the feet of JESUS, and be content to learn of Him. The tongue of CHRIST, has unfolded to man those secrets which no glass can explore; which no computation can discover. He has taught us that the soul of a beggar's babe is more precious than the stars; He has assured us of its im-

mortality; He has enabled us to follow its flight from earth into eternity; He has revealed to us the world of spirits; He has demonstrated the resurrection of the body; and has acquainted us with the doom of the wicked, and with the home of the righteous in the presence of God. More than all, He has shown us how to escape eternal misery, and how to secure eternal life! These are the glorious revelations of Jesus: that He might make us wise unto salvation, and teach us that which the world by wisdom never knew.

With this foreshadowing of our Saviour's mission to mankind, it may be well to compare the ministry which He actually fulfilled. From first to last was it not true to its great design, as a word in season to the weary? From His manifestation to Israel, at His baptism, He returns to Nazareth, where He was brought up, to begin His work. There He was well known, from thirty years of humble life, and labour, as the servant of His parents. But, now, He is to appear in a new character: His kinsfolk and acquaintance are to know Him no more, except as they may know Him by faith, as their Redeemer. He enters the synagogue, and according to the custom of the Jews, He takes His turn to read. He finds in the volume

of the book, which is handed to Him by the Rabbi, the place where it is written—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." When He had read these words, He began to preach His first sermon. He said—"this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears:" and the evangelist adds that "all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth; and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" Yes, indeed, the same holy child of Nazareth; but, lo! "the Lord God hath given unto Him the tongue of the learned, that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." And from that moment, till He closed His work, by dismissing to paradise the weary soul of the thief on the cross, how closely was His mission conformed to this its merciful plan! What is the Gospel but a record of His ministry to the poor and needy; to the Samaritan and the Canaanite; the publican and the harlot; to the leper, and the possessed of devils! To these

wearv and heavy-laden sinners how continually did He manifest Himself as mighty to save! Condescending to their personal griefs, and ministering to their sorrows and necessities, He first gained their sympathies, and then added "a word in season," to their souls. So He would still be manifested to the world. The Gospel must be exhibited, by the true believer, in deeds of love and compassion to the ignorant and poor, and then preached as the glad tidings of salvation, to which the disconsolate and the suffering have a special claim.

But let us not suppose that the weary to whom CHRIST thus manifests Himself as a Saviour, are only those who suffer from bodily ills, or from actual poverty. To be subjects of CHRIST'S word in season, we have only to understand our wants as poor and needy sinners, at the best, whom nothing but His mercy can save from being poor indeed, through all eternity. Reflect on the wants of your immortal soul, and thank GOD that He has not sent His Son to mock you with the tongue of the learned, in discoursing things that cannot help you: but that JESUS meets you as you are, in your sins, and your danger of judgment, and offers rest to your souls. Every sinner is

wearry, if he would only pause in his chase of folly, and confess it to himself: he is in need of just such a helper as CHRIST: and to such He offers Himself, to deliver them from the bondage of Satan, and to give them, instead, a yoke which is easy, and a burthen that is light.

I beseech you then, acquaint yourself with CHRIST in His true character, and be persuaded to learn of Him, as alone able to give you rest. It is the purpose of this holy season, thus to manifest Him, as He is. Let this message then be a word in season to your souls. Behold Him as your Saviour, and accept Him, while it is called to-day. The season of grace is rapidly passing: His word to the weary must be accepted soon or never: and oh how weary shall eternal ages prove, to those who refuse it now, while it is the accepted time; now, while it is the day of salvation.

SERMON XIV.

THE GOD OF THE FAITHFUL.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

VERILY THOU ART A GOD THAT HIDEST THYSELF, OH GOD OF ISRAEL,
THE SAVIOUR.—Isaiah xlv. 15.

WHAT is sometimes called Natural Religion is contented with discovering a Creator, in the displays of wisdom and power which abound in the visible universe. But no one need attribute much sagacity to the philosopher whose discoveries are limited by a fact which stares everybody in the face, and which one would think a fool might recognize, as he does the sun. True it is that “the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead;” but this is only half the truth, unless, indeed, “we have followed cunningly devised fables,” in believing that the God of Nature is also the God of Revelation. The

psalmist, while he teaches us to rejoice in the manifestations of God through creation; to see His glory in the heavens, and His handiwork in the firmament; makes this eulogy of the starry worlds, a mere preface to his nobler tribute to the law of God, and the manifestation of His Gospel. Thus where the religion of the senses stops short, the religion of faith only begins to expatiate, and to exult in its boundless prospect. The eye of the philosopher takes in a view of material objects, and says there must be a Creator; but the faith of the Christian puts forth wings, and mounts into the third heaven, and there discovers and enjoys, what no glass can descry, even the knowledge of God in His essence, and His character, in His attributes, and His glory. Thus even sense is forced to cry out, "how manifest is God!" But Faith responds—"how much more He is hidden!" Even this bad world is beautiful, and is girt about with light as with a garment, and is attended by planets and constellations in its wondrous path through space; and when we behold it, as a work of infinite wisdom and Almighty power, we are forced to see its Maker manifested, and to confess His greatness and His majesty. But faith teaches us that nature is, after all, a screen rather than a crystal, in-

terposed between earth and heaven. There is a GOD who works behind the veil, whom all these visible glories utterly fail to display as He is. Much as we know of Him, through observation and reflection, He is infinitely greater, and more marvellous, than we can conceive as the result of unaided perception. 'Tis the Gospel alone that manifests Him, in some degree, as He is; and till we come to the Gospel we cannot do better than to confess our dissatisfaction with all we can see, and know of our Creator. Led on from step to step, from star to star, from thought to thought, we still fail to find out God; and in full view of ten thousand glories that fall short of exhibiting the GOD of our Salvation, we are forced still to seek Him, and to long after Him, exclaiming, *Verily Thou art a God that hidest thyself, oh God!*

The text, however, enables us to go farther, and to add that even the GOD of Revelation is a GOD that still hides more than He reveals. The prophet knows the Creator as "the GOD of Israel," and "the Saviour," and yet He finds reason to ejaculate, "verily Thou art a GOD that hidest thyself." Let us observe the connections of the text. It is one of those fine lyrical interjections, in which the sacred poets

deal so largely. The inspired prophet is pouring forth his revelations, in a fervid strain of promise, which comes to him directly from the Spirit, and fills him, while he speaks for others, with personal emotions of rapture and joy. Catching the great idea, he, as it were, responds to the Spirit, in the language of the text; and what he responds, as a man, he is permitted to record, as a prophet. He is foretelling the issues of the Captivity; the mysterious providences of God in restoring the Jews, through the instrumentality of Cyrus, to their own land; and the divine purpose, in overruling all things, in this way, for the furtherance of His plans, and the accomplishment of His promise, in finally manifesting the Redeemer. Such a revelation, at this moment, was like life from the dead. When the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Hebrews carried into Babylon, there, as it seemed to the unbelieving, was an end of the matter. Where then was the God of Israel? Where was the oath that was sworn to Abraham? Where was the Saviour? In process of time God vouchsafes to explain Himself to His people, through His prophet. In spite of the sins which had brought all this upon them, He is still true to His Covenant.

He assures them that He will fulfil all His promises, and overrule their very punishment to final good. Their captivity shall make the Gentiles better understand the mission of the Jews, as ministers of GOD, to all mankind. It shall be the great link, in a long chain of providences, which shall eventually lead Sabbeans, and Egyptians, and Ethiopians, to come bending unto Israel, and saying—"surely God is in thee, and there is none else." Thus this dark and trying hour of Israel's humiliation is to result in attracting the Gentiles to His light and kings to the brightness of His rising. All this comes to the prophet, like an electric announcement from the court of heaven. Fired with the message, and smitten with a sense of GOD's wise and benevolent purposes, even in His most secret and mysterious providences, he answers—*Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, oh God of Israel, the Saviour!* Who could have suspected thy counsels, or dreamed of thy marvellous fidelity to thy promise, amid all the rebellions and punishments of thy people! But lo! now I perceive thy hidden wisdom. The wrath of man is turned to thy praise. How wicked it is to judge thee rashly; to interpret thy ways superficially! "Thou art a GOD that hidest Thyself." Thy ways are

not as our ways, nor thy thoughts, as our thoughts.

But it would be a use of the text both low and servile, to confine it to the one event with which it is connected in its origin. The incident which gives it birth is but an accident of its existence. As a great truth it stands by itself, in the inspired page, demanding recognition as a general law of GOD, in His providences. Nay, it is a sublime abstraction, in which we may see something asserted of GOD, essentially, as the object of faith, and not of sense and sight. "Verily thou art a GOD that hidest thyself." Here is a characteristic of the true GOD, which must be taken as a foundation principle in interpreting nature, or revelation, or divine providence. The invisible Jehovah is to be received by faith only. He is to be beheld by faith, and approached by faith, and adored by faith, and loved by faith; and by faith, only, can He be properly conceived of, or understood, until the day when faith shall be superseded by sight, and our partial knowledge changed into the fruition of His glorious Godhead. I propose to illustrate the text more fully, by connecting it with what GOD has revealed to us of his nature; with what is manifested in His Gospel; and with what is

concealed from us in the ordinances of his providence.

The God of natural religion is a meagre unit. The God of faith is indeed One, but one in a unity which surpasses reason, being a oneness of substance, with a Trinity of person. But to this sublime and mysterious conception of God, the man of mere sight objects. He asks why he should thus conceive of God as inconceivable. He wants a divinity that he can comprehend; which his own finite powers can contain and carry; and he complains that the Gospel exacts of him at the outset, to believe a God that he cannot comprehend. But the text suggests a truth which is at once, to such a man, a reproof and an explanation. It is a reproof, as suggesting what we ought to know, the fact that God cannot be fully revealed to a finite mind. He is of necessity hidden from our feeble intelligence, by His vastness, His immensity, His comprehensiveness. He is a God that hides Himself, because He has made His creatures with powers too limited to contain Him, and we are foolish if we are not aware that such is the case; and yet, I say, there is an explanation, or even an apology, in the text; for it seems to say to man, do not be confounded at God's mysterious providence, since

you know that He is all mystery. In short, He cannot reveal Himself to such an one as you are, till He has new created you. He hideth Himself in consideration of your weakness. If it becomes necessary to reveal Himself in one point, lo! He only reveals a mystery which staggers you. The more you see of Him the more you are confounded. So He hideth Himself. In His nature there are ten thousand mysteries. Of these He imparts to your faith only just so many as are requisite to the understanding of His Gospel, and no more. He does not delight to try you with incomprehensibilities. On the contrary He spares you. There are truths of the Gospel which require the revelation of some mysterious facts, such as the Trinity of God. This, then, He discloses: and He discloses no more than practically concerns you. The innumerable mysteries of His nature which it is not necessary for us to believe formally, in order to understand His Gospel, these He reserves and conceals. It is in love, then, and fatherly compassion, that "He is a GOD that hideth Himself."

Let shallow unbelief receive its sufficient answer, then, in a statement of this truth. "Why," says one, "why is it that GOD leaves

us so much in the dark about Himself, and tells us so very little that we can comprehend?" The answer is, the more He tells you, the less you comprehend. The more He reveals, the more faith do we require. What a mere idol he worships, who adores only what He understands! Who could desire a God, whose whole nature and entire being could be unfolded in an axiom, and carried in the little head of a village schoolmaster? Yet such is the portable and convenient divinity which misbelief preaches, and which unbelief demands! No graven image is more contemptible. Away with such an idol to the moles and to the bats! The Christian basks in the sunlight of a countenance, to which he cannot lift his eye, and lives in a warmth which he is contented to feel and to love, but of which the mysterious source, he knows, is not to be explored.

The mystery of the Trinity is sometimes spoken of as if it were a gratuitous demand upon our credulity. They who deny it seem to take it for granted that it is arbitrarily proposed, simply to try the believer's faith. The contrary is the fact, and we may safely say, that true as it is, it never would have been revealed, had not its reception been necessary to a reception of the Gospel. In the Gospel, we are

fully introduced to three separate Persons, each of whom is called GOD, and is worshipped, and whom it is absolutely necessary to know in the Christian dispensation, in order to a reception of His offices. Hence, for practical purposes, GOD, who had always declared His unity of substance, was pleased to unfold His personal Trinity. While the Gospel was yet in element, and while a full exhibition of CHRIST, and of the Spirit, did not tax the believer's faith in the divine unity, it pleased GOD to reveal no more than might afterwards demonstrate the consistency of His truth. The patriarchs knew of GOD as a mysterious unity, but could not have explained dogmatically in what that mystery consisted. It was not, as yet, necessary to them, to know the truth more fully, because nothing in the facts of religion, as then revealed, and the ordinances then established, required that knowledge of the divine nature, which the fulness of the Gospel necessarily involves. Under Moses, we see a much more discriminating view of the SON and of the Spirit, than appears in the preceding dispensation. The Trinity was felt, if not perceived, in something like its distinct and doctrinal form. But when the SON at last was manifested, and became, personally, the direct object of faith and

worship to the world; when, at the Epiphany of His baptism, the HOLY GHOST descended personally, upon the Son in a visible shape; and when, at the same moment, the voice of the Father shook the heavens, crying from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son;" then, and thenceforth, the mystery of the Trinity was revealed to faith, because then, and thenceforth, it was evident that either there were three gods, which GOD had declared false from the beginning; or else, that in the acknowledged mystery of His one substance was the fact of tri-personality. In the Christian dispensation this fact is no longer concealed, simply because, in the economy of the Gospel, each divine person is intimately concerned with each individual believer, in personal offices, and through corresponding sacraments, and if we would be saved, we must know, accordingly, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and know them as one only living and true GOD. Do you ask that this mystery may be further unfolded? Then, you merely ask to be further confounded. The existence of GOD is a mystery to begin with. Why does He not unfold that? His unity is another mystery, and one which, to some extent, He has consented to unfold; but, in so

doing, He has of necessity revealed His *Trinity*, and you are the more overwhelmed! If He should go on, 'twould only be to burthen us with further mysteries, and with such as it does not concern us to know. Behold, then, how considerate is our heavenly Father! He gives us nothing concerning Himself, to be taken on trust, further than is necessary to the reception of His Son, and His Spirit in their power and Godhead. And even this great mystery He unveils so gradually to our weak faith, that as we behold its insufferable glory, we are rather smitten with what remains to be known, than with what we know already. We look, indeed, for the beatific vision, as what is reserved for our ultimate knowledge, but meanwhile, we are content to worship what we do not comprehend, saying, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, oh God of Israel, the Saviour!*

But useful as is the text, in accounting for much that belongs to the Divine nature, in its essence, it is more specially applicable to the Incarnation, for to that it is directed by the prophet. The whole passage is prophetic of the Epiphany, or manifestation of CHRIST. But consider for a moment, the nature of that Epiphany. "The Word was made flesh."

Even so, "for verily thou art a GOD that hidest thyself, oh GOD of Israel, the Saviour." Who would not have said that GOD, coming down to men, should have done so in all the brightness of His majesty, shaking the heavens, and illuminating the earth? Instead of this, He whose name is Wonderful becomes a little child; the Mighty GOD is a helpless babe; the Everlasting Father is the son of Mary. He is manifested indeed, but it is to faith and not to sight. To the natural man "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Faith only, "beholds His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The Epiphany was an appeal to faith: hence, to thousands who saw the incarnate GOD He was not manifested, and to millions who have heard His Gospel, He is yet unknown. The Incarnation implies a mysterious concealment of the divine glory, which faith only can penetrate. GOD hid Himself. His kingdom came, "not with observation." The Virgin was obscure and lowly; her spouse, the carpenter; their city was Nazareth; and all the accidents of the nativity were confounding to mere sense. Not the inn, but the manger; not poverty, but want; not bare humanity, but "the form of a servant;" these

were the tokens of Jehovah's presence. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, oh God of Israel, the Saviour.*

I said the text was specially appropriate to the Incarnation; and this view of it is sustained not only by the context, but by its very terms, as addressed to "the Saviour." Here is the mediatorial system; the GOD of Israel, and the Saviour of all the world, and the Man CHRIST JESUS, exhibited as one and the same in a single oracle, and addressed as the hidden GOD, whom we worship as manifested. The implication seems to be that His divinity, and His mediatorial offices should be revealed to faith only; should be always unintelligible to sensual and carnal minds; to all such as "have not the Spirit." From the very beginning of the Gospel it has been so: and the venerable Saint Ignatius, who received his doctrine immediately from the Apostles, and sealed it with his blood, in the Coliseum, at Rome, says accordingly—"Let my life be sacrificed for the doctrine of the Cross, which is indeed a scandal to the unbelievers, but to us is salvation, and life eternal. . . . For the virginity of Mary and He who was born of her, were kept in secret from the prince of this world, as was also the death of our Lord; three of the mysteries most

spoken of throughout the world, yet done in secret by GOD." See, then, how the secret was manifested. To sight, He was "of no reputation;" to the world, He was the Nazarene; He was lightly esteemed; He was a Galilæan, a Samaritan, a demoniac; last of all He was the Crucified. It required faith, to see Him, all the while, as the Son of David; the GOD of Israel, the Saviour. Hence the large rewards of their faith, who "saw His glory" through the veil of His flesh. It required large faith, the faith of an Israelite indeed, to say to the carpenter's Son, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of GOD, thou art the King of Israel." It was strong faith that spoke when St. Peter said, "Thou art the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD." And oh, what a victory over the world, and the flesh, and the devil, is seen in the faith of the poor thief, who discerned "the GOD of Israel, his Saviour," in the agonizing victim who was hanging upon the cross, beside him, numbered with transgressors, and "pouring out His soul unto death." Pilate, who walked only by sight, supposed he had written a bitter jest, when he set over His head, "His accusation," as "King of the Jews," but the poor thief saw a better handwriting nailed to His cross, and interpreted the inscription, in its

truth, when he said, in faith, Lord, "remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Oh, my brethren, we sometimes complain as if GOD hid himself only from us. We forget the blessing pronounced on them who having not seen Him have believed, and we speak as if it would have been good for us to have had our portion in the days of His flesh. We say, as the Jews did concerning the prophets, that if we had lived in those days, we should not have done as they did, who crucified the Lord of glory. But observe, from these instances, as well as from others, that it required faith, then, just as it does now, to discern the Saviour. Is it not easier, in fact, to believe that CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of the Father, than, against all pre-conceived impressions, to be called to behold Him in a manger, and to worship Him in the person of a babe? Is it more difficult, now, to seek Him in the closet, or to find Him among "two or three," than it was in the days when He withdrew Himself, and disclosed His personal presence only to Mary, and her sister, and Lazarus? Is faith more tried when bidden to approach Him through the sacraments, than it was when the clay and the spittle, or the hem of His garment, or a few loaves and fishes, were made tests of

a spirit to be enlightened, and healed, and fed? When did CHRIST so reveal Himself that unbelief could not murmur, and find a pretence for refusing His claims? Or, when did faith discover Him, in all the glory of His Godhead, or in all the sufficiency of His atonement, except as something discovered indeed? something unsuspected, at first; then dimly seen, “as trees walking;” and only, at last, discerned as hidden treasures of knowledge, and wisdom, and redemption, and sanctification? Or when was He otherwise, than “disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious:” to the world a stone of stumbling, but to the believer “the power of God unto salvation,” *the God that hideth Himself, the God of Israel, the Saviour?*

Our review of these important truths may teach us the necessity of a lively faith in God, as He is, and as He is revealed to us in Holy Scripture. But the text connects with a sublime discovery of wisdom and mercy in a dark providence which had, apparently, frustrated all GOD’S promises and destroyed His Church, and it may, therefore, be properly turned to account, in a practical way, as teaching us trust in God, amid the dark and trying circumstances of the Church, in our own

times. In fact it is a good motto for a Christian amid the trials of his own personal experience: *Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.* It is not possible but that all things should work together for good, to a child of God, but how often God is pleased to work our good in His own wise way, and not at all according to our ways and thoughts! So with the Church. God is working out the great ends for which it exists, and He will surely fulfil all the precious promises which He has made to His spouse. Even its sins, its disgraces, the very captivity into which some of its children have fallen, will be overruled, and made to bring about the glorious result of a general return to the good confession of the faith once delivered to the saints. When the text was written, as we have already remarked, the Church of the Hebrews appeared to have failed, and to have become extinct. It was long since her children had offered a sacrifice, or kept a passover. A whole generation had passed away since the ordinances of the Law had been observed, as the Lord commanded Moses. Scarcely any were left of those who first hung their harps upon the willows of Euphrates, and wept to remember Zion. Apparently, God had left His noble vine to de-

struction: the wild-boar out of the woods had rooted it up. But, now, it pleased GOD to unfold to Isaiah some of His plans; the results of Daniel's ministry; the raising up of Cyrus to perform all His pleasure; the restoration of the Jews, and the rebuilding of the temple; the final appearance of the promised Star of Jacob, and the gathering of the nations to become partakers of the faith, and covenant, of Abraham. Thus the prophet beheld the hand of GOD working always underneath the surface of human events. And so we should do. In the Apocalypse—that neglected book which it is so blessed to study, endowed as it is with special benedictions upon him that readeth—we are furnished with an intelligible outline, of the history of the Church militant, its trials and sufferings, and of the perils to which the faith of individual Christians must be exposed. We can understand much of it, much more than is generally supposed; and by it we may greatly strengthen our faith, and fortify our patience, in times when all that is evil seems to have the mastery. This, at least, it makes clear—the fact that nothing happens by chance; that GOD has provided for all emergencies; that He has a plan, and is pursuing it to the end; and that if we fail to

trace it, we may still safely confide in His word, and say with Isaiah, "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, oh God of Israel, the Saviour."

I know that all Christians are by no means watchers of the providences of God on this large scale. They very little conceive of their relations to the great work of God in the world, and in fact, limit their thoughts to their own salvation. But the times are fast becoming such as will force the faithful to think more earnestly, and feel more earnestly, and live more earnestly; more like Daniel in captivity, and less like men that "stretch themselves upon their couches," or like "careless daughters," and "women that dwell at ease." Meantime, I suppose that no Christian absolutely escapes great trials of his faith in view of much that he is forced to observe, amid the changes and chances of ordinary life. For example who has not been led to marvel at the delays of the divine justice in the avenging of the innocent, and the punishment of wicked men? Who has not been astonished at the prosperity of the ungodly; the afflictions of the righteous; the inequalities of human society; "the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice, in a province;" and the

protracted sufferings of humanity, in general? Where is the Christian that never sighed over the prevailing heathenism of more than half the world? Who does not have moments of painful suspense, in view of the apparent incompetency to their purpose of the means of grace? Who never falters in considering the failure of the Gospel, thus far, to achieve all that it seemed to promise the world, when it came as glad-tidings of peace and good-will? Who never smites his breast, when he beholds the deadness and coldness of almost all Christians, himself included, in connection with that solemn question which our blessed Lord so impressively evaded—"Are there few that be saved?" Oh why are such things permitted? Why does the world go on in sin? Why does God wait, and postpone, and forbear to interfere? Even so, Lord, how long dost thou not avenge thine own elect who cry day and night unto thee, few though they are, and hidden though they be? The answer is, simply, that of St. Augustine; "GOD is patient because He is eternal:" or this of the prophet; "Verily thou art a GOD that hidest thyself, oh GOD of Israel."

But finally, beloved, how sublime the truth that the law by which God upholds and directs

the worlds, is the same by which a sparrow falls, and that while both worlds and sparrows are equally subjects of His providence, they are alike, as nothing, in His account, to the interests of a single soul. I may apply the doctrine of the text, therefore, with confidence and hope to my personal trials as an immortal, and as one whom the precious blood of CHRIST has redeemed. Yes, however poor I may be, how ever unfortunate, however despised of men, I am still, the direct object of a love which has moved the universe, which has bowed the heavens, and come down to earth, and which constantly occupies itself with my personal interests, even to the numbering of the very hairs of my head. Yes—though I see Him not, I have a GOD; I have a Comforter; I have a Saviour. Oh why does One so near—who is about my path and about my bed—why does He never show His face and give me an opportunity of pleading with Him, as a man pleadeth with his neighbour? “Verily thou art a GOD that hidest thyself, oh GOD of Israel, my Saviour!” Yes—Christian, because “the life you now live in the flesh,” you must “live *by the faith* of the Son of GOD.” GOD hideth Himself; and hides Himself, often, behind the thick, dark cloud of His chastise-

ments and afflictions. How else should your faith work righteousness, and "overcome the world?" If it were not so, where would be the Christian warfare? Where would be your soldiership? Where the blessing of those, who "having not seen have believed?" It is the purpose of God, even here, to reward faith by large exhibitions of His mercy and His truth: but, the hour is coming when faith shall be changed to sight. Then shall we see Him as He is, and know even as we are known? And among the joys of heaven we may safely reckon this as one: that we shall then look back on all the way, by which the good shepherd led us to Himself, with amazement at the wisdom, and the tenderness, of His care. Oh, how many riddles that are painful now, will then unfold themselves as instances of His faithfulness and love! How rich will be the page of our spiritual history; and how fair from the heights of the New Jerusalem, our retrospect of the valley through which we found our way to God! Blessed JESUS, give us grace, meantime, to pray and not to faint, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Thee! *Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself:* but "draw us, we will run after thee." Like the Bride, we will

seek thee, saying—"I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense, until the day break and the shadows flee away."

SERMON XV.

WAYS IN THE WATERS.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

LORD, IF IT BE THOU BID ME COME UNTO THEE ON THE WATER.
St. Matt. xiv. 28.

WHEN we reflect upon the immensity of that sacrifice, by which GOD has opened unto us the way of salvation, it seems strange, at first, that He should permit any soul to be lost. When we look at the cross, and behold redeeming love, in its amazing conflict with the enemy of souls, how fearful the thought that all that love, and all that suffering, and all that contest, and all that victory, should only increase the guilt, and add to the condemnation of some, whom it embraces, nevertheless, in its great design of mercy! We may be sure that such loss is in no wise attributable to the Author of our salvation. We learn, from many scriptures, that the souls which He bought with His blood,

were a reward so greatly desired by Him, that the prospect of their rescue sweetened the agonies of His passion. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." And what was that joy? No selfish triumph; no joy unshared by others; but the joy of admitting millions, to the joy of their Lord; the bliss of sprinkling many nations; of seeing children of God as the travail of His soul, and of being satisfied in their redemption, and adoption, and transformation.

Hence we may conclude, that every soul that is not saved, is so much taken from the Redeemer's joy, and robbed from His reward. For it He died, and why should it be all in vain? We must beware of limiting the mercies of our Redeemer, for we may be sure of this, that instead of saving as few as possible, He saves as many as possible; that instead of dispensing salvation with a grudge, He grudges to Satan the poorest, and the most guilty sinner, that is lost; and that so far is He from rejecting any suppliant, because of His great sinfulness, that the worse the disease, He the more delights to apply His balm of Gilead, and to prove by His power to cure, that He is indeed the physician, as well as the Redeemer of souls.

Where then is the difficulty, seeing so many are lost, in spite of redemption, and in spite of the means of grace, and the strivings of the Spirit? Reflect, I pray you, on the fact that you are not mere creatures of flesh and blood; neither are your souls mere machines, capable of being moved mechanically, and saved like sordid matter. You are spiritual beings, made in the image of GOD. You are, in a great measure, the arbiters of your own destinies. You must be moved by moral means, or not at all. You must, of your own free-will, renounce the devil, for CHRIST Himself cannot save you in your sins; sin being the sting of death and the fuel of hell. In short, there is something which man must do to be saved. CHRIST has done His part, and is able to save, unto the uttermost, all that come unto Him: but then they must come. Here is the secret of the soul's loss! "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

With these views, let us examine the text. Our Lord revealed Himself, on one occasion, to His disciples, as the GOD who commands the winds and the waves: whose way is in the sea, and whose paths are in the deep waters. In part to make Himself known to them more fully, in His divine power and attributes; in

part to convince them of His watchful interest in their welfare; but yet more, perhaps, for our sakes, that we might learn practical lessons, of faith and confidence in Him, it pleased Him, after a memorable day, to let them embark alone, in a little vessel, on the treacherous sea of Genesareth, while He retired to pray, on a lonely mountain, and left them to encounter a storm upon the deep. It was the fourth watch of the night, or near morning, when they were far from land, and weary of their toil in rowing against a heavy sea, and a boisterous wind, that they descried, through the darkness, the figure, as of a man, moving on the waters, and seeming at first to draw nigh unto them, and then to pass them by. They were no Sadducees, and their belief in angels, and spirits, at once suggested to them that it was some disturbed ghost, or perchance the angel of death. They all saw Him and were troubled: they cried out for fear; they said, *it is a spirit*. Then He, to whom that angry water was as a marble floor, and who pitied them, as a father pitieth his children, spake to them above the storm—"be of good cheer—it is I—be not afraid." Oh, soul-assuring voice to the trembling disciples! with what joy did they hear the words of their dear Lord, and with what con-

fidence did it inspire them, that now the worst was over, and all would be well! So, no doubt, it fares with the dying saint, who amid the waters of death, discerns the same JESUS walking upon the deep, and hears the assurance of His presence and support, from His own blessed voice. "Perfect love," it is written, "casteth out fear." The disciples were no more afraid, and they longed to receive Him into the ship. But here, as often on other occasions, the ardent Peter is foremost in faith and love, and inventive in his zeal for his Master. No sluggish afterthoughts of what should be done, when all too late to do it, were characteristic of St. Peter's piety. The prompt suggestion of an earnest, single-hearted devotion to CHRIST, opened his mouth at once, not only to utter a prayer, but to give the most practical expression of faith. If it be CHRIST, he concludes, the safest place is nearest to Him; and be it on the sea or on the land, that is the place for His disciple. *Lord if it be Thou bid me come unto Thee.* Oh how beautiful this instance of overcoming faith and love! Peter has not a moment's doubt, but that, if it be CHRIST indeed, he can, with a word, enable him, too, to walk the waters, and to reach his arms, in safety. *Bid me come unto*

Thee. His faith is rewarded, and he hears the word—the simple invitation—*Come*. In an instant the bold Apostle is walking on the sea; and the sea holds him. His faith has removed mountains—the mountains of the deep. It has made a way where there was no way. He goes to JESUS, he knows not how! Only, JESUS has commanded; he has obeyed; and lo! all things are possible to him that believeth. There is a will, and therefore there is a way. Yes, oh Peter, even so, because “the eternal GOD is thy refuge, and underneath is the everlasting Arm.”

But the residue of the story, is not less instructive. So long as Peter persevered, “looking unto JESUS,” he went safely: but, for a moment he suffered himself to be distracted. His mind wandered from his Master; he began to think how very bold was his adventure; he saw that the wind was boisterous: and confused by these mixed thoughts of himself, and his situation, his faith began to waver, and he began to sink. But here again his great necessity reminded him of the great resource. “Lord, save me!” Faith regained the mastery, and strong prayer went forth, in those few words, to the hearer of prayer, as able and ready to save. In a moment, the

Saviour has stretched forth His hand, and upheld His perishing disciple. His mercy is immediate, and even His reproof is gentle—"Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt!"

This miraculous history scarcely requires an interpreter; for who can fail to see in it, without exposition, a striking similitude of the ventures of a young disciple, in setting out upon the Christian course, and striving to go to JESUS, as he has commanded? Here we have, in short, the undertakings and the misgivings; the dangers and the deliverances; the assurances and the rebukes; the achievements and the failures; the struggles, and the final victory, of the Christian's warfare. Let us recur, then, to the story, considered as a parable, and dwell for a time, on its successive lessons of warning and consolation, to him who believes and trembles; who would fain go to JESUS, and yet sees not the way; or who dreads to venture upon faith that is feeble at the best, and may not be faith at all.

Let us observe that a sincere desire to go to JESUS, is the great requisite. Had St. Peter been less convinced than he was, of CHRIST'S divine power to protect and save him; and had his confidence been less, that supreme safety, happiness, peace, joy, and satisfaction were to

be found in the arms of His Saviour; he would certainly have preferred the boat, in which he was apparently well-off, to his adventurous experiment. Now, let me remind you, that every soul that is out of CHRIST, is far worse situated, than were the disciples in their crazy vessel. They were, at least, near to CHRIST, and had reason to confide in His protection; but who, that is tossed on the billows of this life, with no anchor to his soul, and no Saviour near him, can fancy himself safe from peril of shipwreck, and eternal loss? CHRIST, then, is the only resource for all such, and what they need is, first of all, to feel their great necessity, and the infinite desirableness of securing safety, by reaching His arms betimes, and finding there, assurance and repose.

To those then who are convinced of their desperate condition; who know and feel that CHRIST is all they require, and who sincerely long to find Him, and then to lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel, the text is suggestive of the greatest encouragement, and the strongest consolation.

For, observe, in the next place, that all that St. Peter waited for, was a *command*. "Bid me come unto thee." CHRIST being before him, the object of his faith, and his desire, it

was not necessary to see the way, but only to be sure of an invitation, or precept. But, that you have such a precept and invitation, you cannot for a moment doubt. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How many are the forms of invitation; in how many ways does CHRIST reveal Himself to every needy sinner, as his loving Saviour, saying, "whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out!"

It is true that these invitations are addressed to faith, but then, for your encouragement, remember that it is "faith, as a grain of mustard seed," which alone He requires for a beginning. The least of all seeds; the barest fibre of strength in the broken reed; the merest spark, smouldering in the flax; these are His own chosen emblems, of the feeble elements of faith, and penitence, and love, which He willingly accepts, in every redeemed soul, that hears His gracious message, and entertains one moment's thought of obedience. Alas! it is the delusion of Satan, which leads an awakened sinner to linger, inspecting the quality of his faith, instead of putting what little he has to immediate use. Break, I pray you, this delusive spell. "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief:" there is your remedy. Conscious

of your lack of faith, turn it at once into such a confession, and such a prayer? Why sit inactive, when such is your resource? Use what you have, and it will increase! CHRIST calls: say only—"I will arise and go."

And here, we may allow, that, in so doing, one makes a venture: a bold venture, if you will. But, consider, it is ruin to stay where you are. Let us remember the fact, that when CHRIST said to His disciple, *come*, there was no apparent way. Had St. Peter paused to reason about it—true, there was nothing to encourage but the simple command. The yawning deep was between the servant and his Master, and there was nothing but that word *come*, to justify his making an attempt to reach the Saviour. True, but that was all that was necessary, for He who gives the commands of the Gospel, is able to sustain every soul, that sets itself, in earnest, to obey them. CHRIST would never have said the word *come*, if He had not purposed to uphold, to deliver, and to save, His obedient child. These remarks, my brethren, apply as well to the sacramental institutions of the Gospel, as to its moral injunctions. He that said *repent*, said also *be baptized*. He that said *believe*, said also, *this do in remembrance of me*. He that said *thou*

shalt love the Lord thy God, said also *Confess me before men* : and, in all these positive institutions of His Gospel, He says to the sinner—*Come*. Now, it is easy to invent excuses;—to profess to see no way; and to stand, doubting and despairing, instead of looking unto JESUS, and obeying. But we learn from the text, that the very water is a way, to him who simply takes CHRIST at His word. Yea, let it be all storm and darkness; let the billows rave and swell, and the mountains shake, at the tempest of the same! The simple question is—does CHRIST say *come*. If so—it is safe to obey. The only answer is—“Even so, Lord JESUS!”

Alas! this simple spirit of obedience it is, that is wanting in thousands who hear the appeal. And then how many feigned excuses are invented to disguise the disgraceful fact. One man's business, and another man's idleness; this one's great misfortune, poverty, and that one's great prosperity—these are the pretences. Yet, one thing only is wanting—the will. When man has that, CHRIST makes the way. In short, “God's commandments are not grievous.” The service He requires is a reasonable service; and what He requires of His creatures, He gives them power to perform.

For see how many have performed them. How many, out of weakness, have been made strong! In keeping them, how many have found great reward! How many prodigals have been welcomed home; how many great transgressors have been much forgiven; how many, like Peter, have walked upon the water, and through great water-floods gone safely to JESUS, when only once the heart had responded to His call, "I will arise and go."

Observe, next, the great secret of success in walking where there is no way: or in other words, the secret of the Christian life, amid perils, temptations, and trials without, and a weak faith within. So long as St. Peter kept his eye on his Master, and thought only of reaching Him, his achievement was complete. "He walked on the water to go to JESUS." Here is walking by faith, and not by sight: here is simple trust in CHRIST overcoming all dangers, and all difficulties. "But," says the Evangelist, "when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid." Alas! he was looking away from his Master, or he would never have been troubled about the wind: he was thinking about his own poor strength—his venturous feet, and how ill the water was fitted to hold them—and lo! he began to sink. Now so it is with

the Christian, the moment he begins to turn his thoughts away from the great object of faith, and to set them vacantly on the great tempest which the world, the flesh, and the devil, are stirring up round about him ; or to fix them morbidly on his own internal emotions, experiences, and joys and sorrows, with an effort to derive satisfaction from them, or a willingness, by them, to be driven into despair. How many wretched failures, in the mid-way career of discipleship, are attributable to just this cause. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS." There is the grand rule of a Christian's course. But let a Christian cease to look steadfastly to his Saviour, he will, necessarily, begin to sink. A daily renewal of access to Him ; a daily renewal of faith in Him : a constant refreshment of spiritual life by communion with Him—this is the only dependence. Alas ! some sink before they know their danger. They look inward, and outward, and are too blind to be afraid : but ceasing to look steadfastly, and constantly to Christ, as their strength and their salvation, they sink, and are lost forever ; lost because they trusted in themselves, and were too thoughtless, or too proud, to cry unto Him,

for help, while yet He was near, and ready to be entreated ; to hear and to save.

But again, the narrative affords a strong encouragement, in what remains to be noted. When St. Peter began to sink, his case was a sad one, and highly illustrative of the real difficulties and perils of the Christian's conflict with the world. But observe, he had a resource. It is a great thing to have made a beginning in the Christian life, for one genuine and honest struggle towards the Redeemer, is wont to suggest another when dangers and difficulties become real and appalling. No sooner did the disciple begin to sink, than JESUS again rose before him, as the only refuge, and the sure and powerful friend. "Lord, save me!" Oh! the faith, the eloquence, the wisdom of that prayer! No more thought of anything but Him, and His mighty power, and great mercy. One look to the Saviour, one call for deliverance; and the child of GOD is safe again in the arms of his great Deliverer. And then the tenderness of the rebuke! "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore, didst thou doubt." I allowed thy faith to be tried, but thou hadst only to look to me, and thy way should have been firm: and lo! even when thy faith was failing I drew thee to myself: for so,

even unto the uttermost, I deliver all who come to me by faith; "they shall not perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

What the sacred narrative represents as one transaction, is, in fact, the sketch of many successive attempts, and efforts, and partial failures, and great deliverances, in an ordinary Christian's life. Day after day, the believer may seem to himself to pass through just such a series of spiritual experiences. A little faith overcoming great difficulties, and pressing on: fresh discouragements, terrifying and dissuading: prayer—a blessed resource, and mercy its sure sequel. Or, the conflict of life may be on a larger scale. The Christian may seem, to himself, wonderfully supported, in a long adventure of faith, looking unto JESUS, and thus gaining ground every hour. His dangers and his fears may then suddenly arise before him, and bear a proportionate relation to his early progress; and, for a long and dreary time, he may seem to himself sinking and lost. Still, if he never gives over the prayer—*Lord, save me*, the residue of the story will certainly be made good. JESUS will again reveal Himself; His mighty hand, and His outstretched arm, will be sure to interpose at the last; and the soul that has struggled towards

Him, and cried out for His mercy, through such a history of danger and trial, shall never perish, neither shall he lose his reward.

Two things are obvious, however, as the great lessons of the text. *First*, the vast importance of undertaking the work of salvation; and *Second*, the necessity of perseverance. He that would be saved must make a beginning. He must not pause to calculate the dangers of the way; nor even to see where he is to put his first step. Does JESUS say *come*? he is to go. CHRIST will take care that such a soul shall find footing, and shall be able, if need be, to walk upon the waters. Again, once started there must be no giving up. If dangers press, and terrify—nay, if one is conscious of beginning to sink, there is no need of despair. “Lord save me.” Renew this earnest appeal: look again to JESUS, and salvation is still within your grasp. The Christian life would not be a warfare, were there no dangers and perils to be encountered; and our Master, who calls us to be soldiers, fairly forewarns us that the fight of faith will be a real contest, and one that will try what spirit we are of. But the result is no less certain, if only we continue the contest, to the end. Whatever we may encounter, the Captain of our salvation will take care that our

strength shall equal our day, and we are sure of coming off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him who hath loved us, and bought us with His blood.

Finally, let us observe, in the narrative, the beautiful illustration which it affords, of the concurrence of divine power, and human effort, in the working out of salvation. On Peter's part, it is an undertaking of free-will, and every step is one which costs him fresh struggles of faith, and patience, and experience, and hope. He works out his own salvation, with fear and trembling. And yet, not a step does he take, in which CHRIST does not make the way, and supply the strength: while at the last, 'tis JESUS that rescues the disciple, and His is all the glory, both as the Author and the Finisher of our faith. See then, how idle it is to stand debating as to our ability to save ourselves; as to how much man may do, and how much GOD must do for him. Enough—that JESUS says come; and he that will obey, will find that he has something to do, while yet it is GOD that worketh in him, both to will and to do.

Oh if ever we find ourselves saved indeed; safe in the arms of JESUS; our election made sure, and our victory won, to Him, to Him

alone, will our delighted soul ascribe all the glory. We shall look back on perils past, and conflicts encountered, and enemies overcome, and though we shall remember that our efforts were real, and our trials severe, the one absorbing thought will be, that in every time of need there was with us One mighty to save. Then, while the song of redeeming love sounds sweet on our immortal tongue, how strange that He to whom alone we ascribe the glory and the strength of our salvation, shall in turn reward us, as if we were of ourselves the conquerors. How strange that He shall count as service done to Him, all our feeble efforts to save ourselves; and shall welcome us to His free gift, as it were to a reward of our own merit, saying, "well done good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON XVI.

THE GREAT ENEMY.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

FOR THIS PURPOSE THE SON OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED THAT HE
MIGHT DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.—1 John iii. 8.

THE existence, and the power of Satan, are great realities, on which Holy Scripture dwells with emphasis, but which, in general, we practically under-estimate. While the Gospel was yet the least of all seeds, and while the princes of this world were its professed enemies, it was easy for the little band of the faithful to feel that they had a terrible antagonist, in one whom they had renounced in baptism, and whom Apostles had declared to be the ruler of "the darkness of this world," and with whom they were called to maintain a personal war. They saw, everywhere, before their eyes, the most glaring proofs of his craft, and his mastery.

Far and near, as they travelled on their errands of mercy, they beheld a world, not only lying in wickedness, but making a religion of their devotion to lust and all ungodliness. Everywhere they saw the works of the devil, not as we now see them, in transgressions of law, and crimes which shun the light, but in organized, and legal, and religious forms, penetrating all classes of society, and courting attention, and even demanding applause. When they spake of GOD, and proclaimed the holiness of His character, and declared their belief in a coming judgment, and asserted that not only evil works, but even the thoughts and intents of the corrupt heart, were to be eternally punished after death, and especially when they went on to define evil, and to designate the works of darkness, they found themselves at issue with the whole structure of the state, and not less so with the habits, and thoughts, and determined inclinations of the masses of mankind. And then they felt that the God they worshipped was indeed contending with a strong antagonist, in the old serpent whom their Master had undertaken to destroy. They felt that there was a god of this world, a prince of the power of the air, a mighty tempter and tyrant, who was in possession of men's hearts, and who

was able to show fight, and to make a gigantic resistance to the advance of the Christian army. They did not generalize and refine away the idea of evil, as something accidentally uppermost, among mankind, but while they understood the natural corruption of the human heart, they kept before their eyes their great personal foe. They saw in the manifold varieties of human wickedness, a marked unity of purpose, and a deep principle of enmity to their dear Lord; and while they burned with loyalty to their Master, they not less burned with zeal, to wield the weapons of their spiritual warfare, with effect, against His adversary the devil. Day by day in secret, and in the congregation, they prayed, in the words which CHRIST Himself had taught them, "deliver us from *the Evil One*;" and then taking to themselves the whole armour of GOD, they went forth, not knowing what should befall them, but feeling that they were bound to contend with Satan, in his fiery assaults, whether from without, or from within.

I say we poor degenerate Christians of the modern age have too much lost sight of this great reality; of the fact, that is, that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers

of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the *regions of the air*." The devil and his angels are continually spoken of in the New Testament as exercising a direct agency in the affairs of men, and "the prince of the power of the air" is represented as the spirit which now "worketh in the children of disobedience." It is remarkable, too, that the air is often thus referred to as his element; the medium of his universal empire, and the region in which he "goeth about seeking whom he may devour." How is it, that in spite of all that we are told upon this fearfully important subject, we so commonly forget, that as we were born into the kingdom of Satan, and have been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," so our old master lies in wait for us continually, and "desires to have us," and, unless we are very earnest to be saved, will bring us again into captivity? Sin is a fearful thing indeed, and a true Christian dreads it, and strives against it; but I believe there is nothing more necessary to a steadfast Christian life, than a sober, but profound consciousness of having to stand against a personal adversary, only less powerful than God Himself, from whose malicious wiles no human soul in this mortal state is too high, or too low,

too holy, or too corrupt, too strong, or too weak, to be entirely safe. Oh the thought of the old serpent, with his subtil head, and his keen eye, his poisonous fangs, and his tremendous coils, lying in wait for my poor soul, night and day, and resolved, if possible, that I shall not escape: lurking for me, now under covert of flowers and pleasant retreats, and now even in holy places, where I would fain draw near to GOD: never remitting his pursuit, whether I sleep or wake, and ready to take advantage of any unguarded moment, to fall upon me, and bind me in his infernal folds, and drag me down to his own hell—this is the thought to make me feel that the Christian life is warfare, and to quicken me to faith, and prayer, and vigilance, if so be I may deliver my soul from the snare. Yes, this is the thought that makes me cling to CHRIST, and cry to Him for His pure Spirit to strengthen me, and for the succour of His holy angels, that they may be about my path and about my bed, and that by His command they may minister unto me as an heir of salvation, and may never leave me, till they have borne me in their loving arms to the paradise, where at last I shall be at rest. Blessed be GOD, though our enemies be so many and so strong, “they that be with

us" are more and mightier: and while we trust in Him, the great Captain of our Salvation will never leave us nor forsake us.

I have dwelt thus particularly on the personality and power of Satan, because the text loses all its meaning unless we keep these things forcibly in view, while we attempt to make it profitable to our souls. The works of the devil are the works we do by nature, and which we have sworn to do no longer, the Lord being our helper. But we must bear in mind the fact that they are not called the works of the devil, figuratively, or without deep meaning. We are reminded, by the Apostle, that sin is as really the devil's law, as righteousness is CHRIST'S law, and that to commit sin is to serve the enemy of GOD and to become his captive and slave. To do evil is to disobey GOD. This we know, but it does not much affright us, because we feel as if it did no great harm to the Most High, or because we say in our hearts "Tush, GOD careth not for it." But, *to do the works of the devil* is a form of speech exactly equivalent, which yet suggests to us a far more serious view of our guilt. It is to serve Satan. It is to earn his wages. It is to enlist under him against CHRIST'S banner. It is to insult and defy the

Redeemer, and to become part and portion of that kingdom which He was *manifested to destroy*, and which He will assuredly succeed in destroying; and which He will more than destroy in its head and its members, casting wicked men into the same eternal fire which is "prepared for the devil and his angels."

The text, then, refers us back to the original Gospel of the Son of GOD, as contained in the first promise of this Strong Deliverer. To whom was it made? Not to the man: not to the woman, but to the serpent himself, amid the ruins of Eden. "It shall bruise thy head." GOD was speaking to one whose history is not written; whose relations to the Creator are but partially revealed, and whose existence, as an enemy of GOD, is the most appalling enigma with which a carnal and curious mind can entangle and involve itself. We only know that he was holy, and that he fell, and that he was "not spared," and that he "is reserved," and that, meanwhile, he has immense powers, and mighty armies, and is at war with GOD, and has cursed our world, and ruined our race, and filled us with corruption, and subjected us to pain and misery as well as to all iniquity, and that he has the power of death over all who serve him, and that death eternal is the wages

he pays his servants, and the portion he longs to award to all mankind, and that he is always active in ensnaring souls, and that wicked men are his agents, as well as his dupes, and that his kingdom is still strong and terrible in the earth. All this we know, and more we need not enquire, since we know that there is a stronger than he, who has already "bruised his head," and will certainly destroy both him and his works, and will save from his malice and his power, all those who put their trust in Him.

The purpose, then, for which the Son of God was manifested, was that which was announced at the moment of the first transgression. Satan had destroyed the perfections of Creation, and filled the earth with ruin and misery. His works were all foreseen and foreknown of God, such as the mournful history of mankind now reveals them to us. Such works! Oh! this mysterious being; this mortal life, with all the awful issues that impend in the case of every soul that shares it; why should we exist at all, since from the moment we are born, the devil is upon us, and works within us, and surrounds us with his works, in every form, and drags us to the grave? This enquiry is natural, but it is useless, perhaps presumptuous and profane.

One only thing is of moment for us to know, and that, GOD has fully revealed. The spoiler is spoiled, and the desolater is desolate: "the snare is broken, and we are delivered." The purpose for which the Son of GOD was manifested, He has achieved, in dying for us. He who was emphatically the "seed of the woman," having no human father, has "bruised the head" of Satan, as Satan has "bruised His heel," and he is still carrying on the war, which is to destroy the works of Satan, and which is to end in giving victory to us also, provided we also fight manfully against him. Here comes into view the work which CHRIST is now carrying on in the world, and the work which we must permit Him to carry on, in us, individually.

Observe, then, that CHRIST has undertaken to destroy the works of the devil, as they exist in all heathen lands, both in their false religions, and in the universality of moral corruption.

The condition of the world, as the Gospel found it, is vividly sketched by St. Paul, in his first chapter to the Romans. It was that of a revolted universe, in its height of rebellion against its Maker. Nor must it be retorted that their ignorance of GOD was an innocent one, seeing they had not been evangelized.

The Apostle declares that they sinned against the light of nature, and against the suggestions of their own consciences. Their sin was, no doubt, less in degree, than would be ours, in like transgression; yet the Apostle says expressly, that they were without excuse. The original heathen were apostates "who did not like to retain GOD in their knowledge:" their children were less guilty, and yet they sinned against what little light they had, and gave themselves up to "work iniquity, with greediness." In this condition of voluntary alienation from God, He Himself sent upon them the punishment of blindness, allowing them to demonstrate, by their acting out their hearts, what the human heart is made of. They sinned against conscience; God allowed them to stifle conscience, and sin on. All heathen history—all heathen literature—all existing monuments of antiquity, bear witness to the horrible results. They tell us that the human intellect may be cultivated to any extent, and yet know nothing of virtue, nothing of benevolence, nothing of purity. Among the heathens of Greece and Rome, mind achieved such triumphs as even yet delight and instruct mankind; but what did they for the heart? Give a few philosophers their due, who drew

upon nature, and conscience, and reason, and primitive traditions, for certain frigid rules of a morality which they did not practice and which they commonly based upon mere expediency, yet what did their schools effect to purify the heart? In theory, the philosophers and their disciples extolled virtue, while in fact they wallowed in brutal vice, showing at once the remonstrances of conscience, under the light of nature, and their sin against both. And meantime they spurned, instead of pitying the masses, and their world went on in iniquity, unchecked and unreprieved. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Their altars smoked with incense and with holocausts which the Apostle affirms "they sacrificed to devils." Blind Fortune, brute Force, and more brutal Lust—these were their gods; and to these they gave not only offerings, but "their own selves, also." The blessed Paul had seen their devotions in a thousand places, and in every form, and his whole soul seems to have been full of the conviction that his warfare was with Satan in his strongholds. In what awful language does he portray the works of the devil, as he found them, everywhere the same, throughout the heathen world! He describes them as "being filled with all unrighteousness,

fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." And the words with which he seals up this terrible catalogue of crimes, are even more fearful to think upon, because they show us that the heathen were conscious sinners, in all this iniquity, and hence subject to the wrath of GOD: "Who, knowing the judgment of GOD that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Such was the kingdom of Satan, as it existed among the most polished nations of antiquity. Every scholar will bear witness that the testimony is true. Alas! how many heathen authors, whose unrivalled genius delights the Christian student even to this day, afford him nevertheless a melancholy corroboration of the record of St. Paul. Their poetry and their prose alike celebrate and commend unmentionable forms of vice. And sadly imperfect as the work of the Gospel still is, in all the world, it is refreshing to reflect what millions of souls

it has rescued from such degradation, and sanctified as vessels of mercy to their fellow-men. Yes, verily, when we think of the millions of truly Christian homes, in which, throughout all the world, the true GOD is worshipped; and when we compare their blessed purity and happiness, their love, joy, peace, benevolence, and piety towards GOD and man, with the very best estate of the families of ancient Greece and Rome, we cannot but feel that CHRIST has already "destroyed the works of the devil," in a glorious degree, and so as to encourage our hearts that a more perfect triumph of the Gospel is at hand. Reflect that on the day that CHRIST rose from the dead, his followers in Jerusalem were only a hundred and twenty, while, with the rare exception of a few Jews and proselytes, the whole world knew not GOD, and was full of darkness. Among the most civilized nations, there was not one matron, not one maid, scarce one intelligent child, who was not familiar with vices, which have no name among Christians, and who did not in person commit iniquities, unblushingly, which we can scarcely credit, till in such providential store-houses of evidence, as the buried cities of Campania, we have seen with our own eyes, the proofs of their unutter-

able depravity. "A world lying in wickedness," and whose "light was darkness," such a world our blessed Redeemer undertook to illuminate when he "was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Now what these heathen were, all heathen are, to this day, and by nature, we are all heathen. Behold, then, what a work CHRIST is now carrying on, in the world, wherever His Gospel is preached, and where it prevails to the regeneration and sanctification of men's souls. When I reflect on the desperate wickedness of the human heart, even a little good surprises and delights me, and I rather wonder that the gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church, than that the progress of the Gospel is so slow. But when again I think upon what remains to be done, and that we Christians are the instruments by whom CHRIST is yet to be manifested to millions, before the works of the devil shall be entirely destroyed, then I should despair, were it not that the promise is sure, and that CHRIST will accomplish the purpose of His manifestation, however unworthy we may prove ourselves of a share in His great war with Satan, and of the rewards which such soldiership alone can ensure!

And this brings me to the work of CHRIST in

the individual heart, in cleansing it of the works of the devil, and reducing it to His own service, in His contest with Satan. To what purpose do I pretend to sympathize with the mind of CHRIST, as the Redeemer of mankind, if I myself, refuse Him a place in my heart, and will not let Him set up His kingdom there? Reflect, I pray you, that your heart is, by nature, all that you see developed and full-blown, in the character of heathen nations: and that, having undertaken to destroy the works of the devil, your Saviour must work a work in you, or destroy you at last, with him, as his willing captive, and part of his kingdom of darkness. He has already done a great work for you; a work which none other could have done; He has already "bruised the serpent's head," so that if you will, you may easily secure the benefits of His victory for yourself. But you must not imagine that these benefits consist merely in salvation from eternal death, for even CHRIST cannot save a sinner in his sins, and until you have allowed Him to destroy the works of the devil in your heart and life, you are none of His. So long as you live in sin, you defeat the whole object and purpose of GOD in becoming "manifest in the flesh," at least so far as you can do it, or as re-

gards its results to yourself alone. Oh! how utterly hollow is faith, how vain is zeal, how false is profession, on the part of him, who fails to let grace transform him from the power of Satan, to a lively and practical godliness, "full of mercy and good fruits!" The devil and not CHRIST triumphs in such a heart. Satan cares very little for nominal enemies, provided they do his works: and what does CHRIST want of a follower, whose heart is Satan's own fortress, and who never surrenders it to the Master, under whose banner he pretends to serve?

Alas! my brethren, the world is full of speculative Christians who are too plainly soldiers and followers of this sort. And of these some are doubtless self-deceivers, for they have a zeal for God, and even a form of godliness, though they deny its power. Such men see, very clearly, the beauty and perfection of the Christian religion. They often walk about Zion, and tell all her towers and bulwarks, with a sort of pride. Nay, they take a strange satisfaction in the triumphs of the cross, and seem, often, very busy in trying to forward its progress in the world. So Jehu, in the elder church, displayed his zeal for the Lord; and, indeed, "he drove furiously," and if that were

true piety, he would have been saved. But, it is one thing, in a moment of feeling, to rebuke iniquity in others, and another to sit down, patiently, to the life-long task of cleansing one's own heart, and warring with Satan there. Yet, this only is what CHRIST accepts and acknowledges as His work. Jesus triumphs only when a heart is turned from sin to holiness. There He displays His power, where He can show a soul purged from the works of the devil; and where the man who, by nature, served Satan, in all uncleanness and wickedness, now brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-constraint;" for "they that are CHRIST'S," continues the Apostle, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Let no man understand me as undervaluing doctrine, or setting lightly by the sacraments, or sinking the value of faith, or proposing any work as meritorious, save only as it is sprinkled, and baptized, and perfumed with the merits of JESUS CHRIST. With all my soul I love and cherish the Apostolic and Catholic Creeds, and I live by the faith which they teach me to profess, in CHRIST, and in the holy communion of his mystical body, the

Church. Nor do I under-estimate an intelligent, and even an intellectual piety; nay, I highly prize even the flowers that grow on Zion's walls, and admire the religious character which is adorned by a refined and cultivated taste. But, oh! with all this, it seems to me, that it is the ethical part of our holy religion which alone deserves to be admired for its own self; because this is its end and object, the purpose for which the Son of GOD was manifested, and that which His atonement magnified in the law, while in His blessed life, and in all His teaching, it is the crowning glory. In short, unless we copy CHRIST, to what purpose is He set before us as an example; if we do the works of the devil, to what purpose did He die for our sins? And what does doctrine avail; or where's the worth of creeds, or for what does the Church herself exist, if it be not to make those holy who are naturally wicked? Where is the triumph of the Gospel, if the lives of the baptized are the lives, at best, of philosophers? or if the vices of the heathen still grow rank under the washing of regeneration, and the clear shining of the truth? Was CHRIST incarnate, did He bleed and die, that the world's old sins might flourish under new names? Have evil passions, and even devil-

ish ones, such as envy, hatred, and malice, a right to exist among Christians, so long as holy things, and not worldly things, are supposed to be their exciting cause? Or is it so that CHRIST is only glorified, where all these are put away, according to His commandment, and where charity, while she "rejoiceth in the truth," still "seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil?"

It is a recognized truth that example preaches more forcibly than precept. It was the holy lives and deaths of primitive Christians, that appealed so mightily to the Gentiles who persecuted and slew them. Now as CHRIST was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, so he is manifested still by every pardoned sinner, who works the work of GOD, and thus attests His power to change the heart. To such a manifestation of CHRIST, we are all called in our several stations, and in this way every one of us can glorify God, and declare His truth. To the heathen, we are the appointed vessels of this manifestation. Like St. Paul we are *debtors* to the barbarian. We have no right to withhold knowledge from them, or with idle speculations as to their present and future condition, to excuse ourselves from giving them GOD's message of mercy. Enough

that it is CHRIST'S command that His Gospel should be published to every nation under heaven, and that His church should announce to every creature, the fact of his redemption, the worth of his soul, and the glory of that immortality to which he is called by the Gospel.

To this broad command, and to its liberal performance, by Apostles and martyrs, we owe it that we ourselves are not, at this moment, heathens and barbarians. We have received it by the sacrifices of others: now, then, shall it stop with us? If so we have received it in vain. We are devoid of the spirit of Him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost;" we are none of His, and that language applies to us by which He characterized the Jews—"ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Oh, horrible paternity! Can any one, by living on, in sloth and indifference, deepen, in his soul, the lineaments of such a sire, and pamper the leprosy which he has transmitted to a loathsome family? But perhaps I speak to some one whose maxim is that "Charity begins at home." Be it so! Begin with your own heart, and cleanse it, by divine grace, and be transformed into the image of CHRIST. And then if you be a parent, go on with your home

charity, and you will contribute something to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Alas! does not Satan sometimes shelter himself beneath a Christian's roof, and lie in wait for innocent childhood, in many a domestic paradise? Are your children guarded, watched, strengthened and defended as they should be? Is there no Esau among your sons who, because of your neglect, is growing up a profane person, and who for one morsel of meat will sell his spiritual birthright? Look at the beloved ones around your table, and say whether you are doing your duty to them. They are CHRIST'S children more than yours. Are you rearing them for Him? If not, in all probability, they had better never have been born. Look too, at your opportunities with friends, dependants, servants! Charity has, indeed, a large field at home: for who is charitable that can see any soul, which he can enlighten with the Gospel, living and dying in ignorance and sin? Oh for grace to hate sin as CHRIST hates it, to fight Satan as He has given us an example, and to purify ourselves even as He is pure!

SERMON XVII.

THE PRAYER OF THE GADARENES

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

AND WHEN THEY SAW HIM THEY BESOUGHT HIM THAT HE WOULD
DEPART OUT OF THEIR COASTS.—St. Matt. viii. 34.

OUR Lord Himself assures us that in sending His Only-begotten into the world, the eternal Father was not without those paternal affections, which would have led a human parent to say, with confidence, “they will reverence my son.” The Omniscient God, indeed, could not but foresee the end, from the beginning: and in a sense, He sent His Son to be crucified: but yet in another point of view, the coming of CHRIST was an event, in which GOD challenged the allegiance of mankind, and dealt with the world, as a long-suffering Sovereign, with a rebellious people, upon whom every effort to win them to submission, was to be tried, hopefully, and with a prospect of success.

He had sent prophets and patriarchs in vain ; last of all, he sends His well-beloved, saying, "they will reverence my Son." I will make an appeal to their hearts. Four thousand years have passed since perfect holiness has touched the earth, in human nature. Now I will send my Son, who, as the second Adam, shall renew all things in His sinless person, while yet, over and above His manhood, His divinity shall sanctify the soil on which He treads, and shine out, in every act, winning and attracting all hearts to imitate His perfections, and to adore His goodness and majesty.

Such, humanly speaking, was the natural prospect of CHRIST'S mission to mankind. The philosopher, who makes no allowance for the infatuation with which man's corrupt heart clings to sin, and hates an example that rebukes its lusts, would say that the career of radiant virtue through a miserable world could not be less than triumphant. But the text refutes the theory, and demonstrates the corruption of men to be such as the Gospel asserts it to be. The Son of GOD Himself descends to the earth, and condescends to seek out an obscure and miserable village, as the scene of His wonderful and benevolent works ; and lo ! the people beseech Him, "that He would de-

part out of their coasts." Such is the unenviable distinction of the Gergesenes of Gadara. But alas! we shall soon find that they were not alone in their prayer. They were more than rivalled by the Jews themselves; and heathens as they were, it may be that in the last day, those men of Gadara shall find it more tolerable for them, than it will be for us.

JESUS came into the country of the Gergesenes: and no sooner had those blessed feet been set on its unworthy soil than man in his misery, presented Him with griefs to be borne and infirmities to be healed. Two frantic demoniacs, whose kinsfolk had driven them forth to dwell amid the tombs, and whose violence was a terror to the passing traveller, rush forth to assault him, in the way. But the demons discover the holy atmosphere into which they have hurried their miserable victims, and shriek out their testimony to the presence of their righteous Judge. Reserving them till the day of wrath, he simply bids them depart from their abode in human breasts; and suffering them to enter into a herd of swine, and drive them to destruction, shows at once the frightful power of fallen spirits, when they have their way—and their powerlessness, when the God that heareth

prayer, avenges and rebukes. The swineherds, flying at the sight, spread among the people the wonderful story of the demoniacs' restoration, and of the destruction of their property, which they had kept, no doubt in special contempt of their Jewish neighbours, and the law of their GOD concerning swine. By this, the people of Gadara knew—they might have known—that they were themselves exposed to the visitation of evil-spirits, of terrible power and malignity; and they were also assured of the approach of One, who could destroy that power, and who had actually restored to comfort, and to their friends, two of their afflicted countrymen, who had been the curse of the regions in which they dwelt, and deplorable objects, at once, of terror and compassion. How was such a deliverer welcomed? Who came out to bless Him for His mercy to those poor men, and the people to whom they belonged? Who claimed more of His benevolence, and brought Him the sick and palsied to be healed? Who, like the Centurion—exclaimed, "I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof," and worshipped the condescending love that had brought the Lord of glory to so mean a place as that? Oh, the people came out to meet Him, but alas, it was

not to hail the Son of David : with one accord “they besought Him to depart out of their coasts.”

And had these Gadarenes no lepers to be cleansed ; no lame or palsied to be healed ; no broken hearts to be bound up ; no groaning sinners to be pardoned ; no tears to be wiped away ? See—GOD was among them, offering them their heart’s desire ; ready to hear their requests, and to answer them ; and they had but one to offer—that He should go away, and give His mercies to some other people. Their only want and wish was that the Lord JESUS CHRIST should leave the Gergesenes to keep swine, and to be tormented of devils, or in other words, to pursue their disgusting trade, at the hazard of their souls and bodies, unmolested by the divine benevolence that would call them to pursuits more worthy, and rescue them from the bondage of Satan, and of death !

Well may we be amazed at such a story : for it simply proves that men whose god is mammon, can prefer the company of devils and of swine, to that of the LORD of glory ! It shows us the sordid character of thoroughly carnal hearts ; and teaches us why, to many, CHRIST has no form nor comeliness, no beauty

that they should desire him. We learn from the context that JESUS took them at their word. He entered the ship, and returned to His own land, to exalt his own city, Capernaum, unto Heaven, by the mighty works which He did therein. He whom the Gadarenes would not receive, went about other parts of Galilee doing good. None came to Him with prayer that went not back enriched with mercy. The lepers, He cleansed; to the blind, He gave sight; the penitent, He pardoned; the dead, He raised. These things were done for other people: they might have been done for the Gadarenes, had they not feared for their swine, and "*besought* Him to depart out of their coasts."

To say nothing of another world—what losers were these people, by their infatuation! The world itself has at last found out the loveliness of JESUS' character, and will acknowledge that the ground on which He trod was holy, and that His presence anywhere was life and peace. Yet so blind were these people, that they thought themselves wise, in bidding Him depart, as soon as he came among them: and when He retired at the word, they felt themselves happy in their riddance, and contentedly set themselves to their sordid pur-

suits. And so—there was no JESUS to pass through their villages, and stand at their doors and knock. Among the Gergesenes, there was no dwelling honoured by His tarrying, like that of Mary and Martha; no table there had JESUS for a guest; no house of mourning heard His consoling voice; no marriage feast was brightened by His presence, and made illustrious by His miracles; no children, amid the Gergesenes, were folded to His bosom; no mothers there heard His blessing pronounced upon their babes. Cold, cheerless, godless, Gadara! how dark and gloomy was the region, in which they loved swine better than such things as these, and besought JESUS that he would depart out of their coasts.

And yet, my brethren, there are such regions nearer home. Have you seen the household where the name of JESUS is a strange name, or only used in profane contempt! It matters little though the dwelling be princely, and the furniture rich, and the worldly comfort such as wealth alone can buy. It is another Gadara if JESUS be not there. "The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked," says the word of GOD, and the Christian that enters it, feels a cold chill, as of the second death. It is a dwelling in which there

is no God. Its inmates, like the Gadarenes, fancy themselves happy, though in truth, their happiness is the prodigal's curse—feeding swine, and not “coming to themselves;” spending their thoughts and cares for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not. But see how really gloomy and desolate is their home. It is enough that the *curse of God* is there : enough that “the wrath of God abideth on them.” As in Gadara—JESUS has often stood at the door and knocked, but He has been “driven from their coasts,” and now there is no Saviour sanctifying their joys, and consoling their griefs. His name is not invoked by them in the changing scenes of life. He is not with them at the board, or beside the bed of languishing; nor does His angel encamp around that dwelling to deliver them. Where is that hallowed love between brothers and sisters, between husband and wife, which makes home a heaven, and prepares its inmates for the pangs of separation, and the sure sorrows of advancing days? Where, above all, is the daily view of worlds beyond the grave; the assuring hope of heaven, and of reunion there with all that have been loved, yet rent away; where is the blest repose that follows evening prayer; where the

happy rising that is immediately followed by the bended knee, and the sunshine of answered petitions all day long? Ah! how happy the family might have been: JESUS was ready to bless them—even at the outset of life: but “the curse of the LORD” is in their dwelling now; because they practically beseech Him to depart out of their coasts.

And every heart is like Gadara which has refused to let JESUS in, when He has tenderly approached, and offered all His love, and the infinite benediction of His peace. Think of a soul that might have been brightened by “the peace of GOD which passeth all understanding;” by unshaken trust, and confiding love; by a certain faith, and a holy hope; by such a preparation for life and all its cares; by such an experience of the power of JESUS within, to subdue and drive away the instigations of Satan; to calm the tempest of the Spirit; to say, in many a storm, *peace be still*. Think of such a soul, self-despoiled of such blessings, and going aimless and shiftless through the world, no anchor here, no sure haven hereafter. Yet hearts there are that have deliberately besought the holy JESUS “that he would depart out of their coasts!” Few, perhaps, are the hearts which He has not

visited, at times, with offers of His mercy. Few are the consciences that have felt no compunctious knockings at the door; few are the souls, that if JESUS dwell not there, have not been guilty of driving Him away, and choosing worldly objects rather, and devoting themselves to some worldly gain. But, oh! the desolateness of the soul—that for the sake of anything which this world can give, has doomed itself to the darkness of being given up of GOD to the power of the devil.

So we see that although JESUS walks no more among us in the flesh, we yet may imitate the unhappy Gadarenes, and commit the same awful sin, and irremediable mistake. Let me notice, therefore, the danger, and whence it arises; and briefly warn you, my brethren, against ensuring yourselves a misery that lasts in two worlds, and deepens through Eternity!

The human heart is capable of being supremely devoted to almost anything. With the Gadarenes—*worldly gain* could make the keeping of swine a lovely work, and the entertaining of the Saviour, a thing to be avoided, and repelled. But anything less than the love of GOD, and the hope of heaven—is sordid in the estimation of GOD: and a heart fixed on anything less, is debased and deadened in His

sight. The danger rises then, from this character of the heart, its proneness to love everything better than CHRIST; its ability to choose anything instead of Him, and to settle down in contented exile from His presence. While then few, to whom I speak, would believe themselves capable of consciously repelling and driving away their Saviour, let all feel the danger of doing it more subtly, that is indirectly but not less fatally, by setting the heart on something less than Him, His service, His rewards, His heaven. Satan cares not how it is done, if he can only tempt us to drive JESUS from the coasts. Nay—he is a profound tactician, and he loves to take possession of the soul, without alarming it; and would prefer to occupy it with the enemy, without startling it, or letting it know the nature of the transaction, till accomplished and settled. Depend upon it, Satan means to have your heart; and he will occupy it, if possible, with some worldly thing. It may be distinction; it may be wealth; it may be some other idol, but he will occupy it, with something to exclude the love of JESUS; with anything that will drive Him away. Some men surrender their souls to his stratagems at a very cheap rate: and others he buys with a larger price,

the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!"

As then the danger rises from the proneness of the heart to fix its affections on something worldly—the only safety is, in setting its affections, early, earnestly, undividedly on CHRIST. The Gergesenes had doubtless heard of JESUS, before He presented Himself among them: and if, from the first, they had loved the story of His mighty works, and given themselves time to hear of His deeds of mercy—they could not, as they did, "have besought Him to depart." The first thing, then, is to wait upon the Lord, and acquaint ourselves with God. Let the Saviour of the soul be first of all sought and longed for by the soul—and His coming will not be unwelcome; He will not be driven away when He stands at the door and knocks.

If life were longer, brethren, and more certain than it is—even then there would be great need of an ever-present help in time of trouble, for the longer men live the more are they called to mourn its vanity and vexation of spirit. In youth, and while the evil days come not, there is something at least to disguise the dreary Gadara, where JESUS has been

driven away: but in years, in poverty, in bereavement, in sickness, in death—how does that cold and desolate region show itself in all its hatefulness. And how often life is terminated before the cheat is discovered! How often as soon as JESUS is grieved away, and the world deliberately chosen, Death appears with his claim, and Satan with his! How often they who would live here, feeding their swine, are forced away, by the hard master whom they have chosen, and paid the wages of death eternal! The Scriptures do not inform us as to the remaining history of the unhappy Gadarenes; but we know, that one in this way, and another in that, they were soon called to die, and that they must give an account in the day of judgment, for mercy proffered and for mercy despised. Think of the moment when they shall seek to enter the coasts of heaven, and think of the answer which CHRIST will give them, the echo of their own words to him—"Depart."

But I cannot conclude without reminding you of the fearful realities which seem to be hinted at, in the narrative of the evil spirits, and the contentedness with which the Gadarenes chose to remain under the power of Satan, rather than be delivered from it, at the

expense of their property. One would say that the discovery they had made of their liability to suffer from the personal assaults of Satan and his angels, would have alarmed them beyond measure, and that the one desire of their hearts would have been, to be forever secured against the invasions of such mighty and malicious agents, by the mightier power of the Holy Ghost. But no. The supreme love of gain, is the supreme love of the devil. The soul of the covetous man is tied and bound by his covetousness, to the bondage of Satan; and this bondage is no figure of speech, but a reality, to which it is all important, if possible, that the slave should awake. When will men understand that the enemy whom they renounce at baptism, is no shadow, but a real person, and the master of many inferior spirits, who are ever employed in deceiving and destroying souls: that to renounce him in words, is not enough, and that he is resolved, if possible, that no soul shall renounce him in deed; and that, accordingly, it costs a struggle, and a great one, to escape from his power, effectually? Such is the assurance of many Scriptures, and our only hope, in view of the dangers which beset us, resides in the fact that our Redeemer is mightier than our enemy,

and that the Spirit of God, dwelling within us, is an effectual safeguard against the spirit of evil. I fear there is little spiritual life, where there is not a daily consciousness, and persevering effort, to keep off the assaults of the devil, and to quench his fiery darts. Many seem to think that if they have gained one victory over him, he retires forever; and hence after one season of repentance and of tears, they give themselves over to an easy life, imagining that the work is done. But CHRIST tells us that when "the unclean spirit is gone out of a man," he retires only for a time, and is sure to return with seven other spirits, worse than the first. How then? "They enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." So, CHRIST accounts for many a fall from grace, and for final ruin, after a fair beginning. The soul of Magdalen was a Gadara, from which JESUS was not driven away, and accordingly he cast out those seven devils, and the seven spirits of GOD entered in, and dwelt there; and so the soul of Magdalen was saved. All this is true history, written for our instruction and warning; and who knows but the seven-fold power of Satan is enthroned in his own soul, if he is not conscious of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and of the

love of JESUS, shed abroad in his heart? Believe it, then, if JESUS stands at the door of your heart and knocks, you must receive Him for a guest, or before you know it, you will be entertaining another; one who "desires to have you," and who will not easily give you up, or let you go. Oh! how happy is he in whose heart his Redeemer dwells, excluding all inferior possessors, and making it impossible that it should admit His enemy, or become like Gadara, when JESUS had departed. Abide with us, oh Saviour, leave us not; depart not from our coasts, and bring us at last to the coasts of the heavenly Canaan, and to the joy of thy presence in thy glorious kingdom.

SERMON XVIII.

THE TONGUE IN JUDGMENT.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

BY THY WORDS THOU SHALT BE JUSTIFIED, AND BY THY WORDS THOU SHALT BE CONDEMNED.—Matt. xii. 37.

THE close observer of our Sunday services cannot but have remarked the method which characterizes the Gospels for each day, in their succession, during the Epiphany season. Beginning with the Holy Babe, and the Star of Bethlehem, as His first manifestation; the next is presented in the Holy Child, as He reveals to the Doctors in the Temple His supernatural wisdom and knowledge. Then follows His primary manifestation of His divine power and glory in the beginning of miracles at Cana, in Galilee; and this is followed by another display of His mercy, in that great miracle wrought in behalf of a Gentile, the Roman

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Centurion, with which our Saviour connects His promise of a vast ingathering of the Gentile world. On the Fourth Sunday we are reminded of the fact that He was manifested even to the Satanic powers, as the promised seed, who had come to destroy the works of the devil, and to bruise his head. The Fifth Sunday exhibits the retaliation of Satan, in sowing tares in the field of CHRIST'S husbandry, and our Lord's prolonged patience in overcoming the mischief thus done to his kingdom. Finally, the Sixth Sunday brings us to the very different manifestation of CHRIST, which is yet future, and reserved for the last day. The same JESUS, whom we beheld in the manger, is exhibited in the clouds of heaven, upon the great white throne. A series of festive commemorations is thus completed, and he who has duly observed them, has learned something of the Apostle's meaning when he speaks of the "Mystery of godliness," and says, "God was manifest in the flesh; justified in the Spirit; seen of angels; believed on in the world; received up into glory."

But in returning to the subject of Judgment, which has, so lately, occupied your attention, I am aware that it is advisable to present it in a point of view somewhat different

from that which has already been surveyed. Nor is this a difficult task, considering the variety of subjects which necessarily connect themselves with that of the end of all things. But in consideration of that review which we have just made of the mercies of CHRIST, and of the impressions we must have gathered of His meekness, long-suffering, and pity, the question may, very naturally, arise whether it be possible that this same lowly JESUS is yet to ascend a throne of judgment, and to visit indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. The text asserts even more than this; that not only the works, but even the words of men are to be thus weighed, and rewarded: that CHRIST shall bring into judgment, even these exponents of our secret thoughts; and that, mild and merciful as is the Lamb of GOD, it will indeed be a day of wrath when He reveals Himself as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

And if we examine the connections of the text, I think it will be apparent that such a judgment is necessary; that long-suffering requires this complement and counterpart; and that some men are so bad that their salvation is impossible. When I see this glorious JESUS going about from city to city, healing the peo-

ple's sicknesses, bearing their infirmities, rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep, I am sure that His compassions fail not, and that He will save, unto the uttermost, all that come unto Him by faith. But when, in the context, I see the record of man's conflict with mercy; his impious malice, waxing worse and worse as mercy shows itself more and more inexhaustible; then I understand what the Psalmist says, "there is mercy with Thee: therefore shalt Thou be feared." For, oh! when the wickedness of man is such that mercy itself is made an occasion of blasphemy, and when the God of love is obliged to pause in the midst of His benevolent miracles, to administer such rebukes to impiety as God alone can give, who can doubt that such impiety is to be judged at last, and that the same God will then reveal Himself as a "consuming fire?"

The blessed Saviour had just wrought a gracious and wonderful work. One had come to Him oppressed of the devil, and had been released. Eyes that were blind before, beneath His creative finger, had opened to the day: and lips that had been dumb, had broken forth in words of rapture and of praise. "The blind and dumb both spake and saw." The

simple people remembered the words of Isaiah, "then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." What wonder then that they said, "Is not this the Son of David?" Who could forbid them? Alas! there were some standing by, in the garb of the grave and reverend rulers of the Jews, whose whole heart was moved within them with jealousy and rage, by such demonstrations of popular sentiment. They answered the suggestion that He was the Son of David, by a contemptuous implication that He was *nobody*, and profanely suggested that His merciful work was wrought by the aid of Satan. "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Now, it seems to me, that a more fiendish iniquity than this is scarcely recorded on the pages of inspiration: such cool and consummate malice! In the very face of a demonstration of Almighty power, such a contempt of the Most High! "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Was it a just man against whom they thus railed? If so, it was an affront outrageous to be borne. Was it an angel, whom they thus rewarded for stooping to soothe a mortal's sorrows? How

fearful the suggestion that such a minister of love was an emissary of Satan! But no! These are but poor advances towards the true representation of the case. He that endured such contradiction of sinners, was the Lord of Light and Glory; it was God, Himself, stooping from the throne that dazzles the seraphim, to consort with sinful men; it was such a God, in the very moment of the exercise of his compassions, in a work which heaven stooped down to behold, against whom these men shot out their lips, and moved their impious tongues. They called their God a sorcerer; they pronounced him in league with the prince of devils. And do you suppose the thorns and nails of the crucifixion gave him more lively torture than these bitter words? And shall this wrong be never righted and avenged?

It was at these words, that he who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," was moved to holy indignation, and changed His meek demeanour for a surpassing majesty. In a moment, He seemed to ascend His judgment seat, and to enfold Himself in those robes of authority and justice, which shall array the Son of Man, in the day when only His pierced side shall be bare, to remind the world of what was done to Him by men. Oh!

terrible foretaste of the last sentence, the words in which He then denounced their sin. He assured them a greater than Solomon was before them; He informed them that there is a sin which is never forgiven; He exposed the venom of their hearts, and the poison of asps that was under their lips; He hinted the solemn responsibility of man for the gift of speech; He described to them the horrible state of a man given up to Satan and his angels; and while He declared that the men of Nineveh should condemn them, and called them a generation of vipers, he added—"Even so, shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Their last state shall be worse than the first, and they who have ascribed my works to the devil, shall, themselves, be given over to his sevenfold power.

But as words gave occasion to this remarkable sermon, and awful rebuke, it is to be observed that the text, which is part of both, is a most striking proof of a man's accountability for the use of his tongue. It is a commentary, too, on another scripture, and shows with what strictness God will bring "every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Men, indeed are disposed to distinguish between words and works; but Scripture shows us that

GOD Himself acts on the principle, which a man of the world has reduced to a maxim of human wisdom, that "words are things." And so they are things. Dreadful things; "hot, burning coals;" yea, "firebrands, arrows and death." No marvel that God has made a law against their inconsiderate use. For, as the tongue is the glory of our frame: as, next to the power of thought, 'tis the most excellent gift of our Creator; as by this, we are ennobled above brutes, and associated with angels that excel in strength, and are even permitted to draw near to the Most High; so, it is but reason, that the giver of such a consummate faculty, should count its abuse an iniquity too heavy to be borne. For what is the abuse of speech, but the stealing of a harp from the choirs of heaven, to glorify the devil, and debasing, to the service of hell, an instrument which GOD has contrived to make the harmony of paradise on earth? The sin of Moses, who "spake unadvisedly with his lips," after a life of singular moderation and meekness, was severely punished, as if on purpose to teach us, that in proportion to their position and influence in society, GOD will hold men strictly accountable for the use of speech. And I have often thought that this miracle of a faculty, is

somehow, in its own nature, sacred to God, and that such is the meaning of the proverb, "the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from Jehovah." Thought and speech are faculties which we cannot use, without as it were, invoking the Lord. Hence bad thoughts and bad words are intensely evil deeds. No marvel therefore that a rabble of children, or young lads, were on one occasion, so signally visited of God, for blasphemies which were ingeniously wicked. Elijah had just gone up, in a chariot of fire to heaven. What must have been the depravity of the children, if not of their parents also, who pursued the prophet, that had received Elijah's falling mantle, with outcries, importing their contempt for him, and for his God, and expressive of their desire that he might also be taken from the earth! "Go up, thou bald-head," they shouted after the venerable Elisha; that is, begone! away with thyself! go after Elijah; go up to God, and let us serve Baal! What marvel that God sent against them the bears of the wood? What cursing and bitterness in their young hearts; what arrows they shot from their tongues!

True, men distinguish between words and thoughts, and say *'twas but a word*. They

curse, and take God's name in vain, and say it was not meant; it was uttered without thought. But, "the heart is deceitful above all things," as well as "desperately wicked." Men do not know their hearts, but God does; and He to whom all hearts are naked and open, in reproofing the blasphemy to which I have referred, introduced the text, by the awful reproof—"Oh generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of *the heart*, the mouth speaketh." Such is God's testimony as to the heart of a foul-mouthed man. It shows us where words come from; not so much from the tongue, as from the heart: and thus we may account for the importance given to words in the text, as being facts, and proofs of character. And we must observe that the rule works in two ways. By words men are to be *justified*, as well as *condemned*: and the Master goes on to say, "a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." Not that good words to the ear, may not proceed from a bad heart, but that God, who judges not by the hearing of the ear, but by His knowledge of what is in man,

knows such words to be evil things, forasmuch as they are words of hypocrisy.

So, then, it is a law of the kingdom, that words in the mouth of reasonable men, are realities. They are the signs of something good or bad, which really exists. They come from the abundance of the heart, and always mean something. They manifest folly and sinful thoughtlessness, if nothing else; but, often they are the symptoms of envy, and hate, and malice; or of deep and latent elements of evil, which otherwise might not have been suspected, even by the rash speaker himself. Then again, words sometimes, unintentionally betray a pure heart, and its innocent and artless thoughts. So that we need not be surprised to find Him who "searcheth the heart and trieth the reins," going on as follows: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof, in the day of judgment." Oh, severe and dreadful day, if this be true! For though I incline to believe that the word here rendered *idle*, might as well be translated *evil*, yet I fear God counts *idle* words, as *evil* words, and will not hold it an excuse, that a man was accustomed to speak idly, or in jest. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," says

the proverb, "but he that refraineth his lips, is wise." We have no right to let our tongue run riot, and if we have spoken at random, it becomes us to repent of it, as of other sins. It is most observable that the Apostles dwell earnestly on this principle, and recur to it, over and over again. What merry-maker but must feel humbled when he reads the injunction of one, whose character was eminently social, who was naturally of a keen wit, and who was well-read in the heathen poets and historians, as well as in sacred literature, who, nevertheless, says, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth . . . neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks?" So, too, in another place, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Such are St. Paul's practical expositions of the text: and if one will compare them with the still more forcible language of St. James concerning the tongue, I am sure he will not accuse me of investing the subject with an importance which it does not possess. Let us reflect that He who gives us these laws, is the Creator of the tongue, and that He uttered the text, in close connection with a miraculous gift of utterance to one who had been dumb. Surely He has a

right to give us laws as to the use of such a faculty : and when He warns us by the Apostle that "no man can tame it," and teaches us to pray for His aid, in the "words of our mouth," as well as in the "meditations of our heart," we should be grateful as well as humble; recognizing the great goodness of God, in justifying, as well as condemning by this rule, and in accepting from us, as an oblation, "the fruit of our lips, even praise unto God."

Such being the awful responsibility of the creature for the gift of speech, let us further inquire as to the words that are to justify, or to condemn him, in the judgment. Let the text be understood. It simply affirms that words are to be reckoned among those works, according to which God will reward every man. It is not hard, then, to say by what kind of words a man shall be justified. They must come from a penitent and believing heart, and as such be works of faith. Thus, "a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things." Such is our Lord's description of good words: words that grow like herbage from seeds, out of a sanctified spirit. Now what are such words? Not merely those of piety, as such; not merely confessions of faith, and the language of prayer and praise,

not only words of exhortation and encouragement to others, or of ejaculation to God, or holy meditation with one's self: but further, all words by which the tongue is not abused, degraded, or allowed to minister to evil; all words which good men need to use in the employments and enjoyments of daily life; all words, which, like the songs of birds, are indirectly to the glory of God, because they are the natural and proper fruit of faculties He has given and of which He only could be the Creator. Hence words of love and good-will; words of chastened mirth, and innocent festivity; words of reverent surprise, or admiration; all words well weighed, and such as are carefully spoken, even in moments of excitement, and such as are the result of self-discipline and well formed habits of speech; all such are acceptable to God. On this latter idea let me, for a moment, dwell. We may cultivate our language, and offer to God well-flavoured, and choice words, as the fruit of our lips, differing from the language of the natural man, as much as the fruit of the vineyard differs from that of the wilderness. I speak not, now, of the principles on which orators and poets choose their words, for they only labour to please men's ears; but I speak of that discipline to which every one must

subject his tongue, who desires to please God. He must form habits of pure and becoming speech; he must lay up words, which need not do injury, if they are called for inadvertently, or in moments of deep and sudden feeling; he must weed out from his vocabulary all words of levity, or which in any wise savour of what is profane; and this he must do, remembering that close rule of the Master, "let your communication be Yea, yea, Nay, nay; for *whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*" I call this a close rule, for it seems to set a seal upon the lips, and but for St. James' exposition, I fear we might not suspect the evil against which we are thus guarded. But if the tongue is "a fire, a world of iniquity;" if it is "set on fire of hell," and if it is "an unruly evil, full of dreadful poison," I think we shall not err in regarding the warning as dictated against the Evil One, in view of his special readiness to defile and inflame the tongue. He then that chastens his speech pleases God, and overcomes the devil: so that we are sure of speaking right, when we speak in the fear of God. Happy is he whose tongue is habitually attuned to words of prayer and praise, and trust; to words of benevolence and mercy; to whatsoever is lovely and of

good-report. Such words are as “apples of gold in pictures of silver.” They are sweet waters out of a clear fountain; and because the meditations of the heart must first be purified, in order to produce them, they are good and acceptable in His sight, who is our Strength and our Redeemer.

There is evidence enough in Scripture, that the God who created the tongue delights in its legitimate use. “The words of the pure are pleasant words,” says the Psalmist, and again, “the words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious.” So many are the intimations of a similar kind, that one is tempted to believe that there is no music so sweet to the ear of our Heavenly Father, as the language of His children, when they rejoice in Him, or when they ask favours in the name of His well-beloved Son. How acceptable, therefore, must be the worship of His Church, when, in the great congregation, many voices are lifted up with one accord in the confession of the faith, or in swelling the strains of the *Te Deum*, or responding to the suffrages of the *Litany*. And in the days when Paul was preacher, or even when Chrysostom or Ambrose expounded him—their faces shining like Stephen’s, and their hearts full of the love of Christ—who cannot

imagine that angels listened with rapture, and said exultingly to one another, "a word spoken in due season how good it is!"

On the other hand, if we enquire as to the words by which men shall be condemned, how plain it must be, by rule of contrary, that all words which spring from unsanctified affections, and unchastened habits, and ungoverned thoughts, and roving fancies, and inconsiderate mirth, are very evil things! "The words of a man's mouth," says another proverb, "are as deep waters." Their true meaning floats not on the surface, but lies deep in the heart. Thus, there are words which, in themselves, are good, in which, nevertheless, "there wanteth not sin," if the heart be fathomed, and the deep cave from which they issue explored. Even the language of worship may be mockery. There is such a thing as being "snared with the words of one's mouth;" and, as for those who bring their giddy and silly airs into the house of God, and even utter their prayers with roving eyes, and vacant starings, let them know how God abhors the worshipper who "honours Him with his lips, while his heart is far from Him." Oh how profane is he who in the holy place, and on the holy day, can trifle with his Maker, by indulging in such idle

words as would be sinful anywhere and at any time. The true worshipper deploras even a wandering thought; but such infirmities are inseparable from our militant state, and need not discourage the Christian, or distress him, except when he knows he does not resist them, or that he "gives place to the devil," by entertaining them. That "form of sound words" in which we worship GOD, and which so many generations of the faithful have used before us, is studiously framed, with reference to our mental and physical nature; it provides against fatigue, and has frequent safeguards against roving, such as recall attention, or fix it upon the great object of prayer. Nor can I sufficiently commend the decent custom which prevails among us, of silent prayer upon entering the church, if it be, indeed, an appeal to GOD, for help to banish all thoughts that are vain and unworthy of the place. It might be well, moreover, to compose the thoughts by a repetition to one's self, of that injunction of the inspired preacher—"keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of GOD, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before GOD; for GOD

is in Heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few."

Before speaking of the grosser forms of sinning with the tongue, I must, also, add a caution, against the abuse of speech, in the sweet intercourse of society. "A fool's voice is known by multitude of words. . . Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin." Let no one answer, that if so it is not safe to live; for who knows not that it is indeed a dangerous thing to live with no fear of GOD before one's eyes? It was a source of comfort to the Psalmist, that he could say, "lo! there is not a word in my tongue, but thou, oh Lord, knowest it altogether;" and to be afraid to "offend with the tongue," is only to "take heed to one's ways." Of such salutary fear as this it is written, "Happy is the man that feareth always," for 'tis a fear that is the beginning of wisdom, and hence of joy and peace. How blessed is the home, where this wholesome fear of GOD prevails, and where a cheerful intercourse goes on, from year to year, among its inmates, with never a word of bitterness and hate, if even of indifference to another's feelings and welfare! Alas! how wont we are to speak words that may do hurt, and to excuse ourselves by saying "it was an error," without

amending our fault. And this is quite too common with even thoughtful men, to indulge in ejaculations, and expressions of the kind which "cometh of the Evil One" What less are irreverent utterances of those words which are strictly appropriate to sacred things, or those less pardonable ones which ought to be dreadful to us from their associations with sin? Fools make a mock at sin," and he who can even sport with hell and the devil, is a fool indeed. Any approach to such folly must be hateful to God, and pleasing only to our great enemy. 'Tis the homage that Satan delights in. And let us not fear that by thus cleansing our tongue, and sweetening the breath of our daily conversation, we shall become demure or stupid. Is heaven a dull abode? Is the speech of angels less enchanting than the rhetoric of ungodly men? Or would you question the elegance and refinement of that language in which Daniel bore his part as a courtier, or in which the stainless Joseph, long before him, fulfilled his office as Pharaoh's premier? What mental power more lively than David's, or Solomon's! Where are words more pleasant than those of the evangelists? more tender than the beloved John's? more sublime than the fervent Paul's? And is the

society of Christian gentlemen less agreeable than that of the lewd and profane? Is the Christian female less lovely for her purity of thought and speech? Oh, there was One “who spake as never man spake,” and whose society was always the fulness of joy; and as in all His works, He taught us to follow His steps, so also in His words was He our perfect example. In that home, at Bethany, where Lazarus, and Martha and Mary were his delighted listeners; or, upon the Mount, with nations hanging upon His lips; how did He teach us the uses of speech, and interpret to us His own saying, “a good man out of the good treasures of his heart bringeth forth good things!”

I have no time to enlarge upon those forms of evil-speaking which everybody fears, and which no one pretends to justify. How often that brood of vipers—slander, misrepresentation and detraction—leave their slime in our accustomed path, or dart their venom at our back! How it infests and poisons society! Who has not smarted from its wounds? I need not strive to convince you that the words of slanderers’ tongues are words that will condemn a man in judgment. But there are words as full of poison, and which aim at the honour of God, which need to be strongly

rebuked, because, alas! they are as lightly regarded as they are uttered. At all times, and in all places, how common are cursing and swearing. How constantly do men blaspheme that worthy name by which Christians are called! As an ambassador of CHRIST, I cannot but rebuke, with feeling, and with indignation, the outrage which is so frequently renewed against His crown. How the round world rings with the rhetoric of hell! Where, on earth, can one escape the breath of cursing, or find a place where its clamour will not invade his ears? You hear it in the street; it comes up through your windows; it disturbs your rest. In business and in pleasure, men swear; amid the dangers of travel, and of the voyage, they swear; in the enjoyments of blessings, they swear; and they swear, to give expression to their sorrows. Men swear—yes, and sometimes women swear. In the hour and agony of death, I have heard words, from female lips, that betrayed the horrid secret of the habit of their lives; and, oh! if mothers swear, what wonder that “the cheek-distending oath” comes from the mouths of unrazored boys, and from children, who almost stagger with the effort of its utterance? “Because of swearing the land mourneth, and my name,

saith the Lord, continually, every day, is blasphemed." Oh! if I speak to any one who is conscious of such iniquity, and who knows that *by his words*, he "is condemned already," let me remind him that "God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain," and that his account is already so black, that nothing but tears of bitter repentance, and the blood of CHRIST besides, can possibly wash it out. I will not pause to argue that your sin is brutal and devilish, as well as deadly to the soul; you dare not defend it, and you cannot excuse it. But, I will appeal to you by one dread reality, which comes before the judgment. You are drawing near the hour when wicked men are wont to speak God's name in a very different way from that in which they use it when they think they have long to live. Who, that is not wholly dead in sin, does not expect, in his last hour, to call upon his God? And will you profane that holy name, while you are alive and well, and while your tongue is a well-tuned instrument, on which you will be sure to call for mercy, in the horrid moment when its cord is loosed, and your voice is tremulous, and your breath is just quivering upon your lips? Who knows how he shall die; or out of what depth of human misery he

may cry to his Maker, in his last pang? Who knows but it may be from the crashing train, or the sinking ship? Even if it be in your bed, you will need help from God. Oh! keep that holy and reverend name against that awful extremity of your need; and if you will not learn to hallow it before, at least profane it not. "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is GOD'S throne, neither by the earth, for it is His footstool." Swear not at all; but above all things take not that name in vain, which you may so soon invoke, in the agony of your departing soul. Alas! how many have first begun to call reverently on CHRIST, in that fatal hour, and how fearful the probability that they have begun too late, in view of that solemn promise, "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

Finally, when we reflect how strongly our words act upon others, and influence them for good or ill, who can wonder that it is written, *by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned?* We are all wont to under-estimate our influence. The humblest individual seldom gives himself full credit for his real power over other men. Our words, therefore, are elements of good or evil to the world according to their character, and

in proportion to our influence. We are constantly corrupting, or else benefiting our fellow-men. And if such be the operation of the tongue, how fearful the fact, that "the tongue can no man tame." The heart, we know, can only be renewed by grace divine, and it is "out of the abundance of the heart" that the mouth speaketh. He, then, who alone can cleanse the heart, He only can tame the tongue. Oh, pray the Holy Ghost to touch your lips, as with a coal from the altar, and to purify your heart within you. Remember that your words pass not into the air, but into the ear of God, and that they are written in His book, and let this thought inspire you daily, to adopt the Psalmist's prayers, "Set a watch, oh Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips;" and "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, my strength and my Redeemer!"

END.





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