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THE TRUE GROUND OF FAITH

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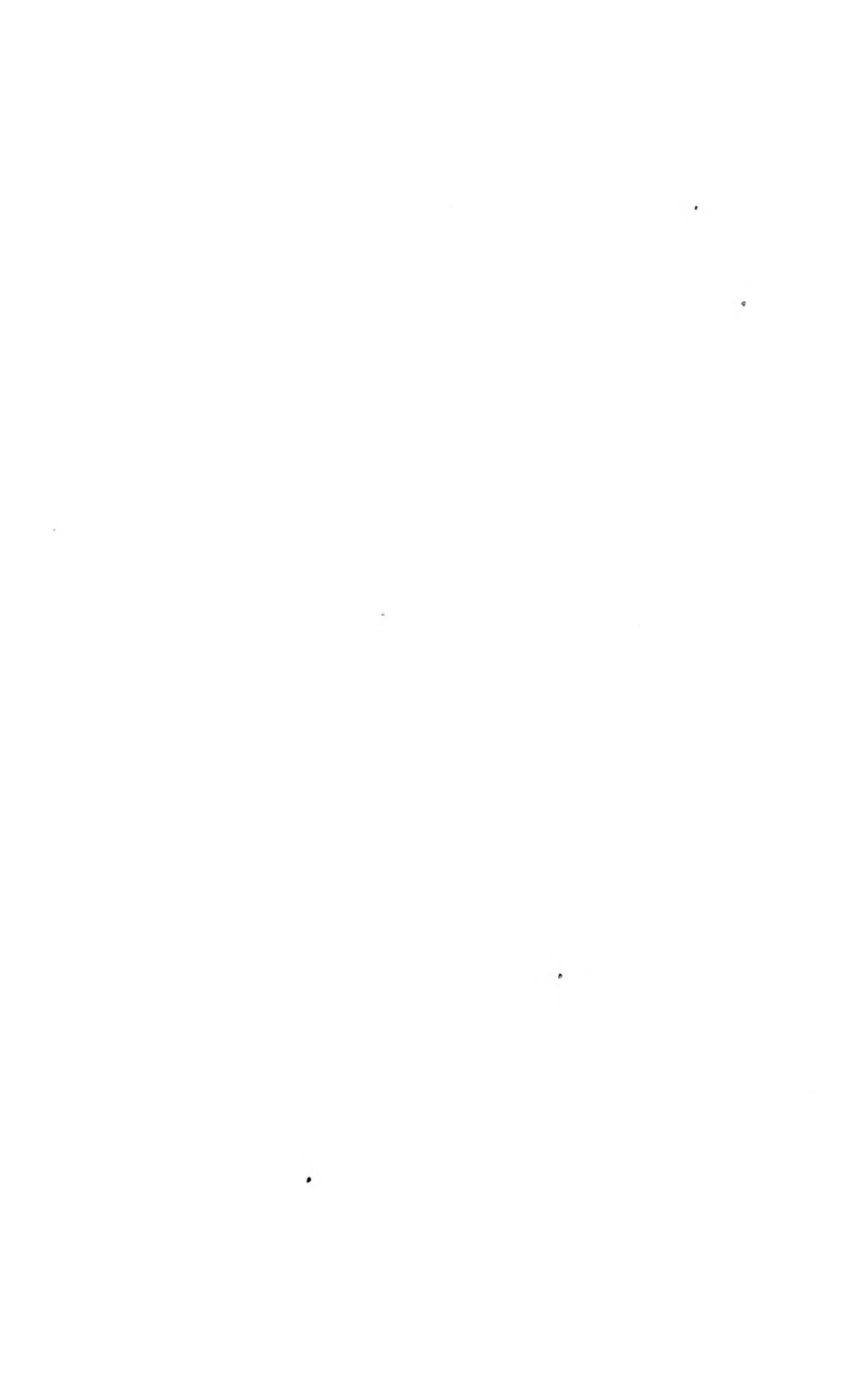
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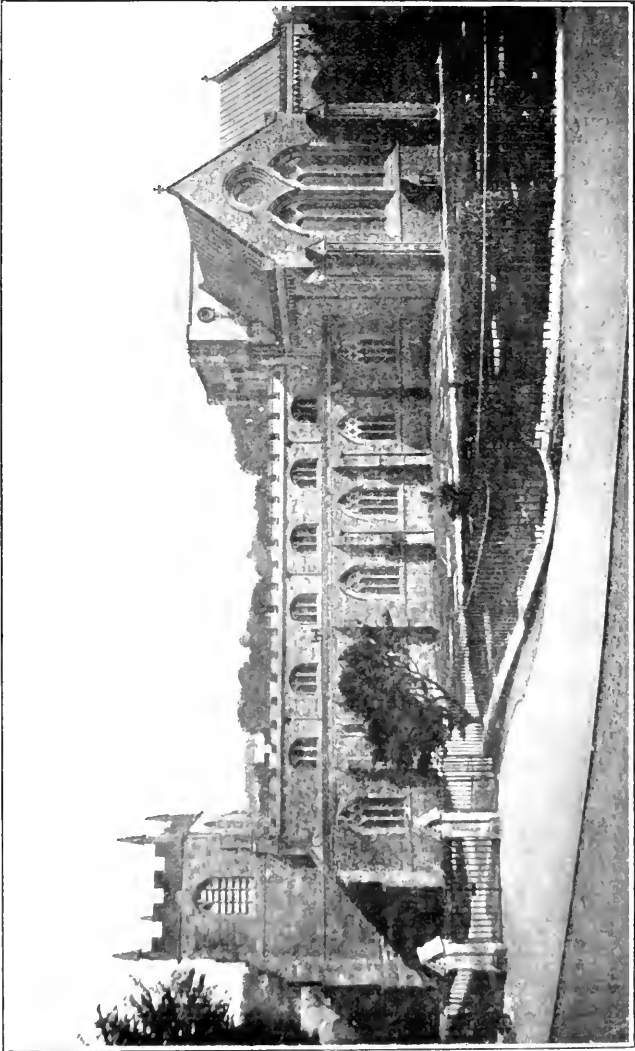
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EXTERIOR VIEW OF BANGOR CATHEDRAL.

THE
TRUE GROUND OF FAITH

Five Sermons

PREACHED IN

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF BANGOR

AT THE REQUEST OF THE VERY REV. THE DEAN

BY

THE REV. R. S. MYLNE, M.A., B.C.L.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY (SCOTS); FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF
ANTIQUARIES; HON. FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY OF S. LUKE, ROME;
HON. MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY OF FINE ART AT BOLOGNA,
AND AT URBINO

AUTHOR OF THE 'MASTER MASONS TO THE CROWN OF SCOTLAND'

With a Preface by

CANON BENHAM, D.D.

RECTOR OF S. EDMUND THE KING WITHIN THE CITY OF LONDON

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1902

The distinguished Welsh scholar and theologian, at whose request these sermons were preached, passed away to the silent land in the late autumn of the first year of the new century, at the age of eighty-three. The Very Reverend Evan Lewis was Dean of Bangor for seventeen years, and often loved in his old age to recall his early days at Oxford, and his varied memories of the famous leaders of the Tractarian movement.

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Dedicated

BY PERMISSION

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WATKIN HERBERT

BY DIVINE PERMISSION

LORD BISHOP OF BANGOR

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PREFACË

THIS little book appears to me valuable, and indeed beautiful, in respect both of the earnest desire which it expresses for the furtherance of the Gospel, and also of the wide knowledge of Holy Scripture which it displays. The writer is a man of evident learning and culture which is joined with a simplicity and unaffectedness which, more frequently than not, accompanies deep learning. He is, I am sure, exactly on the right tack, that which at this moment Christian teachers are most called on to follow—namely, that of being zealous for the spread of the truth which the Holy Spirit of God is teaching them, while at the same time they are careful to reverence the truth which they see that the same Spirit has revealed to their brethren, even when outwardly it seems to take different forms and to find different modes of expression.

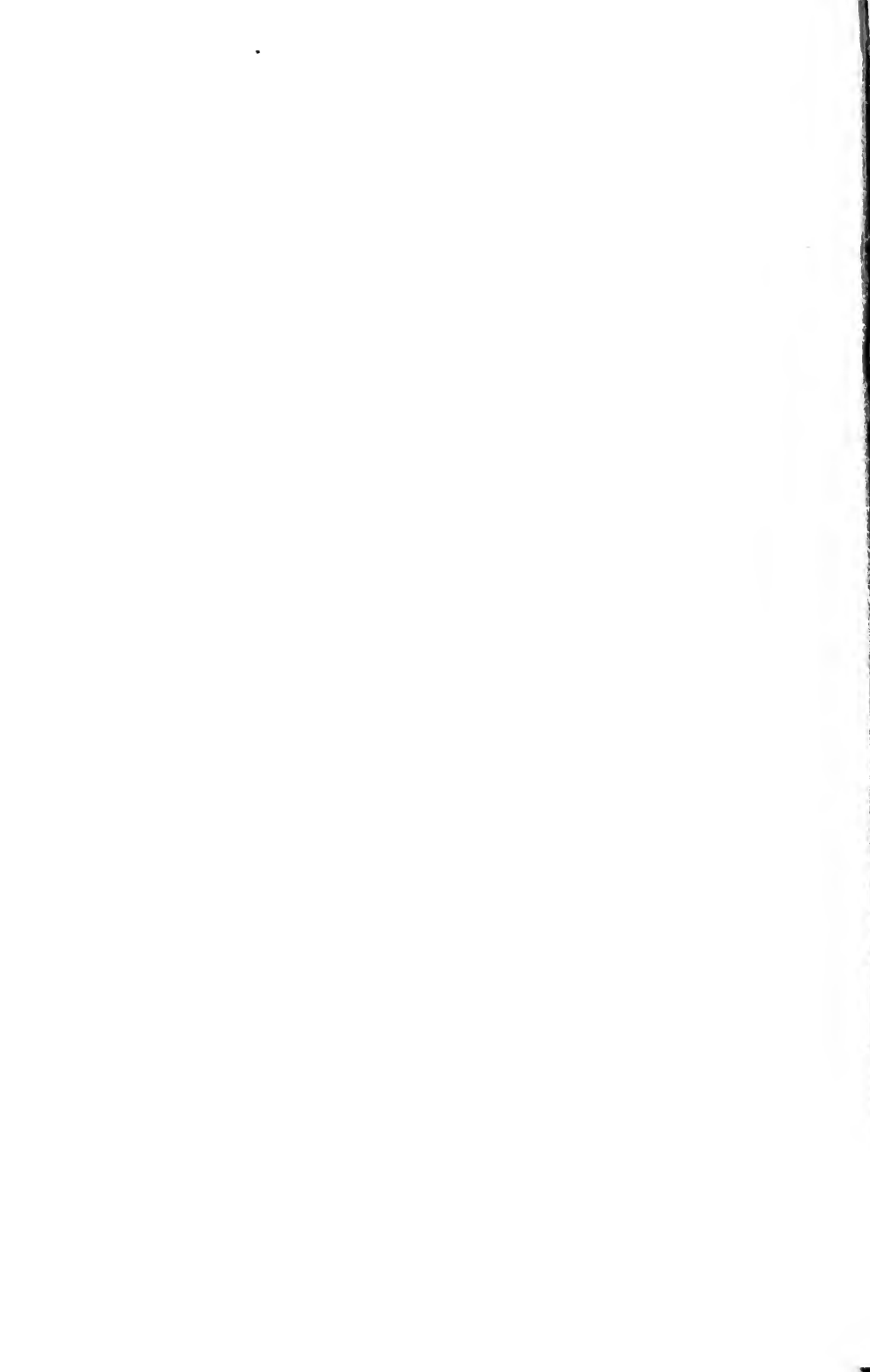
The Author handles Holy Scripture with keen discernment. No good result can be looked for, no hope of light, without reverence. It will be a mere

truism to men of religious experience, but yet I earnestly urge it upon young students that they will never understand the Bible, never get any spiritual insight, unless they begin by realizing the solemn issues at stake. Let a man feel and know that life and death and the world around him are things of unspeakable solemnity, that God has placed him in the world to face them, and to perform the duties which pertain to them, and he will thus far be armed to fight the battle of life, as well as to enter, if called upon, into controversy, and to weigh the points of it when it is brought before him. But, especially, he will have begun with good help towards understanding the Bible. He is likely enough to have questions put to him which he cannot answer, and to meet with criticisms through which he cannot see his way. They may puzzle and even disturb him, but they will not seriously distress him. The word uttered by our Divine Master approves itself age after age, and never more strongly than now: 'If any man willeth to know His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' I believe I have read as much as most men of questions about historical accuracy, about criticism, about doctrinal disputes, and I have never found a man who sought in earnestness of spirit and with a profound sense of the solemn issues of life who did not find in the Bible the voice of God speaking to him.

The Author of this little volume has gone through some of the questions which are agitating

men with his eyes open and eager to see the light. He does not ignore these questions, but, on the contrary, shows how an earnest man can deal with them. And the result, I steadfastly believe, will be that the reader will find, page after page, fresh helps to faith—to intelligent faith on which he can lean in hours of trial; for he will find how men, often widely differing in their modes of expression as well as in their several standpoints, are held together in the Church by their love of their common Lord, by their zeal for His Church, by their reverence for His truth, by their faith in His coming victory, when all things shall at the end be subdued to Him, and God shall be all in all.

W. BENHAM, D.D.



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The spiritual power of the Holy Scriptures, the all-sufficient merit of the Cross of Christ, the religious consolation of Divine worship, the essential characteristics of the organization of the early Church, and the real nature of true belief in the Saviour of men—all these matters go far to make up the true ground of faith which forms the actual support of the Christian soul on the eventful journey through this present world. Multifold, indeed, are the Christian virtues and the Christian graces that are a desideratum for the Christian soul, but those particular points which are insisted upon in this little volume seem to be of very special importance, not only in themselves, but also in regard to the general circumstances of our time. For there is need in these latter days to indicate, so far as may be, what particular Christian truths are of paramount importance, and appear needful to the due and proper maintenance of the Christian faith.

Just as some architectural monuments of great beauty are yet marred in regard to their general effect by a sad want of proportion, so in the somewhat confused state of the prevalent theology at the opening of this twentieth century a similar absence of a due sense of proportion may be detected by the skilled teacher of Divine learning, ever anxious to instruct the world in the faith of Jesus, ever bringing out of his treasure things new and old.

It may be that if this much-needed sense of proportion were more widespread, and the character of what is essential better understood, a vast number of the so-called religious difficulties which now distract the minds of religious men would vanish away, and then the prospect, so much to be desired, of real unity amongst Christian people would be truly advanced, and Christian men would be bound together on the solid foundation of the true faith, built upon the Divine corner-stone, which is Christ.

The study of Holy Scripture, the comprehension of the merits of Christ's Cross, and the true worship of God, the essential features of the organization of the Church in the earliest ages, and the true foundation of faith—these are surely highly important points, on which all Christian people ought to be agreed, and may well form the true basis both of faith and unity.

THE TWO ILLUSTRATIONS CONTAINED IN
THIS VOLUME SEEM NECESSARY FOR
THE ELUCIDATION OF THE TEXT.

- I. The exterior view of Bangor Cathedral reminds every thoughtful reader of the interesting fact that this ancient church was founded A.D. 516, and the saintly Daniel was consecrated the first Bishop A.D. 550, though a large portion of the existing fabric was erected in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

- II. The swoon of S. Catherine in the arms of her sisterhood, with Christ above in glory, is an indescribably beautiful picture in the Church of San Domenico in the old-world town of Siena. The painter was Sodoma, perhaps the greatest master of the famous Sienese school of art. On the other side is the ecstasy of S. Catherine on receiving the Eucharist from the hands of an angel.

ERRATA

Page 9, lines 1 and 4, *for* 'feign' *read* 'fain.'

Page 9, line 6, *for* 'open' *read* 'secret.'

THE WORD OF GOD

ARGUMENT

The word of God endures for evermore, and the revelation of God is the anchor of hope for the soul of man.

- I. The vision of Ezekiel.
- II. The character of the Bible ever a witness to Jesus Christ.
- III. The permanence of the Word.



THE WORD OF GOD

Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven.

P'S. cxix. 89.

I

THE finite mind of man ever longs for the infinite. He who considers the transitory nature of all earthly things desires the everlasting.

Passing soon, and little worth,
Are the things that please on earth ;
Heavenward lift thy soul's regard :
God Himself is thy reward.

God and the things of God endure evermore, even for ever and ever. 'Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven.'

But that word is revealed to the sons of men upon the earth—in the olden time in dim and mystic vision, in the latter days in more perfect simplicity and light.

Thus, to the chosen prophets of God, as

4 The True Ground of Faith

Ezekiel, and other holy men of like nature, the word of God came.

Ezekiel was 'among the captives by the river of Chebar,' when the heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God.

I looked, and behold a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself, and a brightness about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures.

And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

And when they went, I heard the voice of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host.

And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above it.

And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

In such noble and poetic language Ezekiel sets forth the wonderful revelation given unto him by the Almighty. His unearthly vision has riveted

the marked attention of Biblical students in all ages. Note the quick movements, the keen life and energy, the resistless power going forth over all the world, and then over against the restless activity of the four living creatures with their sounding wings, and those wondrous wheels in constant motion, mark the calm power and majesty, the ineffable brightness and unspeakable glory, of Him that sat upon the sapphire throne, girt with the unearthly light of the rainbow above His head, and the shining appearance of yellow amber and burning fire below.

What is it all but the mystic portrayal—as the early Fathers of the Church delighted to set forth in their learned commentaries—what is it all but the mystic portrayal of the glory and the majesty of Christ, Who is the Word of God, perfect man and perfect God, and of the four Evangelists, by whose inspired activities the Gospel message has been, and is now being, conveyed to all Christian people throughout the wide world, and is even stirring as with magic power the principal nations of heathendom?

How often in our own fair land as well as in the sunny South has Christian art loved to use the peculiar symbolism of Ezekiel's vision, and represent each holy Evangelist with his appro-

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priate spiritual sign—S. Matthew with the face of a man, the lion of S. Mark, the ox of S. Luke, and the eagle of S. John.

Walk, for instance, if you will, beneath the lofty dome of S. Paul's, in the ancient city of London, and, gazing upward on Wren's great masterpiece, above each of the four mighty columns, behold each of the four Evangelists with the proper symbol, raised high above the marble floor, yet far below the beautiful domed vault that stretches away towards the sky. Those great stone columns support the heavy weight of the highest vault in Great Britain, the vast dome that crowns the grand cathedral of the largest and the wealthiest city in the world, whose golden cross, aloft in mid-air, signs with the sign of the Christian faith the 5,000,000 people that dwell beneath its peaceful shade.

Precisely the same thing is true of the far larger dome of S. Peter's in Rome, while at Venice the lion of S. Mark is everywhere.

So also the spiritual teaching of the four Evangelists spreads far and wide the intellectual knowledge of the true faith, and compels even an unwilling world to receive the Gospel message. The force and fire of the sacred Word comes home with spiritual power to the heart and

soul of man. The grand effect of their life's work did not cease—yea, could not cease—with the brief tenure of their earthly sojourn ; but even now, at the opening years of the twentieth century, the civilized world listens to their 'holy voices,' and hearkens to the good news they have to tell mankind. As it is written :

Their sound goeth forth into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

How true of each of them is the familiar text of Holy Writ, 'He being dead, yet speaketh !'

Yet above all and over all there is the mysterious Figure seated on the sapphire throne, girt with the unapproachable light and the burning fiery flame, Who out of the midst of the calm majesty and the eternal peace of the heavenly sphere inspired the Apostolic writers with the living words of quickening faith and everlasting love—words that have brought forth lively fruit in all ages, and turned many from the deadly ways of sin unto the living paths of righteousness.

What mystery and yet what simplicity of faith ! The mystery of the unsearchable attributes of the Almighty, unrevealed to mankind ! The simplicity of the stirring words of salvation that giveth life to the world !

* Ps. xix. 4.

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Here, then, in brief outline, is the actual substance and true import of Ezekiel's famous vision. And here it may be well to note how such mystic teaching possesses a peculiar attraction for some highly-cultivated and refined minds in these latter days. It was doubtless after profound meditation on the boundless power and love of God that one of the most famous geologists of the last century placed over the entrance door of his country house the Latin legend: 'In Te, Domine, speravi' (In Thee, O Lord, is my hope).

That distinguished man of science (whom our Sovereign delighted to honour) had learned in the spirit of true humility and reverence to see in Nature Nature's God, and, knowing better than other men the marvellous riches and the hidden characteristics of this fair earth of ours, had loved to study the soft alluvial soil of the fertile plain and the bold crags of the rocky mountain, the everlasting hills and the boundless sea. And the ultimate result of that deep study of natural things, the careful tracing of cause and effect, and the evident marks of design on the part of the Supreme Being, could do nothing else than produce, not only reverence and awe, but also a good hope in God, the Creator of all, made manifest in the natural world.

We would feign believe that such is the tone and attitude of very many of the learned leaders of science towards the faith of Christ and the Word of God. We would feign believe that, if in former days religious teachers were too prone to mistake reticence and silence for open hostility, this is no longer the case, and that there is now a growing spirit of kindly respect between the most deeply-read theologians and the wisest students of Nature. Each may well perceive that their arduous work is really supplemental one to another, suggesting fresh matter for thoughtful consideration in their own respective spheres.

The vision of Ezekiel, however, dwelt upon above in brief outline, is but one example out of many of the marvellous ways in which Holy Scripture sets forth and explains the sacred mission and wonderful attributes of Christ, Who is the Word of God.

II

The entire Bible, in fact, from the first page to the last, does precisely the same thing. Sometimes the revelation may seem obscure and difficult to understand, sometimes the revelation may be clear and distinct, but in the end the central figure is always the figure of Christ.

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There is a Book who runs may read,
Which heavenly truth imparts ;
And all the lore its scholars need,—
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The Old Testament, in many a quaint story and strange legend, by the mouth of hoary patriarchs and stern prophets, loves to tell of the glorious day when the Messiah should be born into the world, and the reign of peace and love begin. The New Testament, in the beautiful story of Christ's holy life, as recorded in the Gospels, in the stirring narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, in the various letters to the early Church, in the mysterious revelation of S. John the Divine, loves to set forth the work and character of Christ as the Saviour of men, loves to appeal to the hearts and souls of men by the heavenly standard of Divine love and self-sacrifice found on every page.

Well does the Epistle to the Hebrews open with these instructive words :

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds ;

Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

As Christian people, then, hearken unto the Son of God ; listen to His words, for ‘ never man spake as this man ’ spake. Wait upon the Divine voice and follow after the heavenly word. God hath spoken by His Son! What more can you want? What more can you need? What further revelation can be desired? Obey that word, and in the very act of obedience find the sure promise of eternal life.

God hath spoken by His Son! In that heavenly speech acknowledge the true ground of faith and perceive the earnest of everlasting salvation.

Regard the Bible as the inspired word of God. Regard the Bible as the revelation of Jesus Christ. Regard the Bible as the best of books, and give it the first place, before and above all other books. Not dwelling upon difficulties sought out by human ingenuity, not cursing an interpretation of a particular passage different from your own view thereof, not hastily condemning a whole body of Christians bound together by a common belief in a special interpretation of a certain text; rather fasten the mind’s attention on

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those numerous verses which tend to build up all true believers in their most holy faith.

There is no time on the present occasion to consider many of the most beautiful aspects of Holy Writ, the sublime poetry in Job and Ecclesiastes, the pastoral lives of the patriarchs, the fiery energy of the prophets, the evangelical prophecies of Isaiah, the genuine courage of S. Peter in building up the early Church, the sustained labours of S. Paul, and his cruel death in Rome ; but, believe me, you will have fastened on the most essential feature of the Bible when you learn to regard that holy Book as the supreme witness for Christ our Lord.

III

‘Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven.’

By way of conclusion, the permanent character of the Word may in the last place engage our attention. Whether regarded as the Person of Christ, as S. John does in the first chapter of his Gospel, or as the inspired word of Holy Writ, there is ever this striking characteristic of permanence.

There may be, and there constantly is, a

striking variety of learned schools of theological thought in various parts of the world. Through the mighty influence of a great teacher they spring into being, have their little day of victorious triumph, then slowly decay and pass out of sight. You may raise a most stirring controversy, you may be pleased with your success in so doing, and, after much clever and subtle argument, you may be instrumental in producing some given result, which will obtain the unanimous applause of the world for a given season, and serve to interest a generation of men, and may then perchance be ignored or forgotten—yet mark well the certain fact that, altogether apart from the opinions of men, however skilful and clever, there ever remains a fixed and permanent basis for belief, unaffected by the general course of religious controversy or speculation. There is a bright atmosphere of faith in which the saints of God live and move and have their being.

The love of Christ, the life of Christ, the death of Christ—of what marvellous import are they to the Christian soul! Surely none may fairly doubt their actual value and real efficacy. But though no place be left for active doubt, yet the widespread restlessness of these latter days betrays a certain spirit of distrust, a certain element of

want of confidence, in both spiritual and temporal affairs. There is a sound stirring in the air; there are odd signs of unforeseen disquietude; there are curious rumours of unreasonable discontent. There is a removing of those things that can be shaken, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain. We wonder what may be the end thereof. Here in this ancient city of Bangor, look ye to your own Cambrian mountains, and learn the solemn lesson the God of Nature teaches from these rugged rocks and stones that crown the distant landscape everywhere in the beautiful county of Carnarvon.

On some chill autumnal morn, hast thou never watched the wild storm-cloud lift its dark head, so full of dire warning, above the distant horizon of the topmost ridge of the eternal hills, and straightway the wide expanse of azure sky was dull and overcast, and the crests of the mountains were thickly girt in dense mist and watery vapour that came rolling down the long valleys, enveloping farms and homesteads, man and beast, as it were in one white impenetrable shroud? Then, all on a sudden the lightning flashed, as burning fire, and the thunder rolled with deafening roar, and the rain and hail poured down from heaven, and the little rills and the large rivers

alike rushed onwards with the abundance of their swollen waters towards the ever-thirsty sea. Then the blackness of thick darkness hung over the shrouded earth.

Yet wait, if you will, but for a few short hours. The entire scene is wholly changed. Look there to the right, in the brazen sky, and see the deep rift in the storm-cloud. Let a few moments pass, and a little gleam of glorious sunlight will burst through and the blue sky appear. Soon afterwards the wide world is rejoicing in the bright rays of resplendent light that now clothe the fair fields of yellow corn, the purple moorland, and the green meadow. After the sharp biting storm* there is fair weather, and all the people sing for joy.

Now, the wondrous events in the inanimate realm of Nature are a true picture of that which also occurs amongst the living, striving sons of men. Sentiments and fashions come and go. The passions of men burst forth into keen, active life, and, passing, die.

* Compare Lord Tennyson on the calm after the storm :

A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand
Left on the shore, that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white.

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A strange rumour,* it may be, arises no one knows how, and, fanned by the evil flame of jealousy and the queer addition of false reports, spreads its rapid way from mouth to mouth, gathering force and strength as it goes, until the heart and soul of the common people is imbued with a marvellous tissue of lies, and right seems wrong, and wrong right in the overflowing darkness and confusion; and men say, 'What will ye do in the end thereof?'

Perhaps it seems as if there will be no end. The incessant labours of good men seem altogether thrown away, and the lives of the saints of God of no avail. The wearied preacher of the Gospel fulfils his noble mission with constant endeavour, but the hardened hearts of men yield no rich array of fruit, but rather refuse to hearken to the goodly sound of the voices that tell of the Divine love. Yea, the very Word of God seems to have lost its ancient power.

Yet stay a moment! Hold back thine hand!

There is a bright gleam of light above the distant horizon, and the Sun of Righteousness doth arise with healing on His wings.

* Compare Horace, 'B. I. Ode,' xii. 45:

'Crescit, occulto velut arbor ævo,
Fama Marcelli.'

Very simply the poet sings :

Christ, Whose glory fills the sky,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
Triumph o'er the shades of night.

Very truly the Psalmist declares :

God sendeth forth His commandment upon earth,
And His word runneth very swiftly ;
He sendeth out His word, and melteth them ;
He bloweth with His wind, and the waters flow.

In some such way, and after some such method, God's dealings with nations and with Churches may be traced on the long page of history.*

Therefore never despair. Go forth in the strength of the Lord God, believing that in His own good time He will accomplish His own good purpose, and His word will not return unto Him void.

Is it not written, ' Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven ' ? As Lord Tennyson once beautifully said : ' Through darkness and storm and weariness of mind and body a passage is built up for His created ones to the gates of light.' Or, as another writer has observed :

God's greatness
Flows around our incompleteness :
Round our restlessness, His rest.

* Cf. the earnest desire of Owain Gwynedd, a Cambrian Prince of high renown, to be buried beside the high altar of Bangor Cathedral, which was accomplished on his death. A.D. 1169.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

ARGUMENT

The Cross of Christ is the chief means of salvation for the sons of men.

- I. The humiliation of the Cross.
- II. The glory of the Cross.
- III. The power of the Cross.



THE CROSS OF CHRIST

God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—GAL. vi. 14.

I

TO glory in the Cross. How very strange to some men such an idea as this must really seem! To glory in Christ's supreme victory; to glory in Christ's marvellous resurrection; to glory in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; or, still more, to glory in His triumphal ascension into heaven—this were indeed natural, this were indeed a reasonable occupation for His devoted followers; but the Cross of Christ, with all the shame and pain, with all the unutterable misery and terrible suffering, how can men glory in this? Is it not verily the saddest of sad events in the world's long history? Not glory, but humiliation, appears to be the true keynote of all that relates to the appalling scene that took place on Calvary's Mount.

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As the Apostle S. Paul* most truly says :

He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men :

And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

As a distinguished living preacher† says :

Let the humble spirit lie at the bleeding feet of Jesus till the Holy Spirit raise it to a full view of the mystery of His majesty and His lowliness, then it sees its own sin and His sorrow ; it sees with the eye of truth the hidden glory, and the heart is broken in that true calm sorrow, which is a sorrow unto life.

As a powerful modern writer says :

Ah ! if you adored a God crowned with roses and with pearls, it were a matter nothing strange ; but to prostrate yourself daily before a crucifix, charged with nails and thorns—you who live in such excess and superfluity in the flesh, dissolved in softness—how can that be but cruel ?

Ah, think of that crucifix as you lie warm in silken curtains, as you sit at dainty feasts, as you ride forth in the sunshine in gallantry.

He is cold and naked. He is alone. Behind Him the sky is dreary, and streaked with darkening clouds, for the night cometh, even the night of God. His locks are wet with the driving rain, His hair is frozen with the sleet, His beauty is departed from Him. All men have left Him ; yea, and God also, and the holy angels hide their faces. He is

* Phil. ii. 7, 8.

† Knox-Little, 'Manchester Sermons,' p. 162.

crowned with thorns, but you with garlands. . . . Hear you not the voice of the Crucified? Follow Me!

We are engaged to suffer by His sufferings as we look on Him. Suffering is our vow and profession.

In all ages the infinite pathos of Christ's death upon the Cross to redeem mankind appeals to the inmost heart of man, and proves his perpetual consolation and sure refuge.

There is the sad picture of the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, Who hath borne our griefs, and was wounded for our transgressions, by Whose stripes we are healed. How familiar to the sincere believer are certain passages in the glorious prophecy of Isaiah, wherein the old story of the Cross and the free pardon for sin reserved for the true Christian are clearly set forth!

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

There is also the far-reaching love, there is the unutterable pity, there is the infinite compassion; and then, beyond all this, there is the one propitiatory sacrifice† offered up before the throne of the Almighty to put away the sin of the world:

* Isa. liii. 6.

† 'Morality in Doctrine,' by Professor Bright, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, p. 331: 'For He who was thus given,

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He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many: for He shall bear their iniquities.

And as the Apostle declares so forcibly: ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.’

Therefore, though the Cross of Christ be to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolish-

who thus gave Himself, had been God from all eternity, from and in and with the Father. His Godhead could impart a Divine efficacy to all that He did or suffered in His manhood, and a Divine significance to that headship over our race, which made Him its sole competent representative. But in so representing us He could, in the highest sense, stand for us. By submitting to a passion which was spiritual as well as physical, which included the agony of the sin-bearer, and the tremendous experience of the forsaken, He, the Man who ceased not to be God, upheld with unique transcendent emphasis the eternal law of righteousness against sin: “the principle that we, sinners, deserved to suffer, being asserted in His sufferings, that it might not have to be asserted in ours.” In this sense “He gave Himself a ransom for many,” and our sins were in effect laid upon Him. He could take them away on our behalf, because as the Lamb of God He had borne their burden, had endured the chastisement of our peace. Vicarious—substitution—satisfaction—we must not give up the use of these terms in a sense which is neither immoral nor arbitrary, but consonant to our Saviour’s office as the second Adam, and involved in the very perfection of His own miraculous love. And thus we may take with us to the throne of grace that plea which S. Anselm recommends to Christian penitents: “My God, I interpose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my sins and Thy displeasure.”

ness, yet it hath ever been to them that believe the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Most certainly in the holy lives of the saints we ever note that earnest longing for Christ, more especially in the solemn hour of death, when earthly help faileth, and the heart's desire can alone find rest and satisfaction in the sacred Figure of the Crucified.

In that supreme moment, even if at none other, the soul *must* turn for rest and peace to God revealed in Christ. Ah, how great is the unalterable line of division between the death of the saint and the death of the sinner! What a stern contrast there is between the solemn peace of the soul that fully trusts and truly believes in the Lord, and the awful misery of the man that dies without hope! And so our cry to God must always be :

Lord, in this Thy mercy's day,
Ere it pass for aye away,
On our knees we fall and pray.

Lord, on us Thy Spirit pour,
Kneeling lowly at the door,
Ere it close for evermore.

Grant us 'neath Thy wings a place,
Lest we lose this day of grace
Ere we shall behold Thy face.

II

Yet there is wherein to glory in the Cross of Christ ; for the utter humiliation of the Saviour was but the wondrous prelude to the glorious victory. Inasmuch as He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, therefore ' God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' By His lonely* passage through the grave and gate of death to His joyful resurrection Christ has satisfied both the deepest and the highest aspirations of Christendom.

Herein is the true basis of all effective Christian teaching ; that which man could not do for himself, nor of himself, was duly accomplished on his behalf by the stupendous sacrifice on Calvary's Cross.

By this supreme act of Divine condescension the old sacrifices authorized by the law of Moses were done away, being fulfilled as well as justified in

* I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me Isa. lxiii. 3).

that heavenly Victim, of which they were the type. Thus the true force and full meaning of Holy Scripture was distinctly set forth before the wondering gaze of an astonished world.

Was it not true, inquired the wisest men of the age—was it not true that the Messiah, so long promised in Hebrew legend and prophet's song, was come at last, and was revealing Himself in power and glory to suffering mankind? Was it not true that Jesus Christ, the highest and most perfect revelation of the Father's love, was the eternal refuge, and the real consolation of the children of men?

There is, then, wherein to glory in the Cross of Christ!

For the whole scheme of making peace with God, and making a reconciliation for sin, was assuredly planned in the beginning in the eternal council of the Almighty; and so the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,'* and S. John, in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle, says that 'God sent His Son to be the propitiation†

* Cf. Lev. xvi. 21, 22, where the scapegoat is typical of Christ. The prescribed ceremonial is remarkable, as well as the final exit of the goat into 'a land not inhabited.'

† Here note the Greek words for 'propitiation': *ἱλασμός* in S. John's Epistle, and *ἱλαστήριον* in Rom. iii. 25, the same

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for our sins,' a glorious work which He was fully able* to accomplish in that He was both God and man.

Moreover, in the third chapter of his Gospel, S. John sets forth the eternal truth, so full of spiritual comfort for the Christian Church :

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And here let me call your serious attention to those striking words in the second chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, which seem in

word being used in the Greek version of Exod. xxv. 21 and in Heb. ix. 5, where it is translated 'mercy seat.' Hence there may be traced the closest connection between the sacrifice of Christ and the ancient ceremonial of the Jewish temple. Compare also the use of *ἰλάσθητι* in the publican's prayer, 'God be merciful, or *propitious*, to me a sinner.'

* 'A Complete Body of Divinity,' by John Gill, D.D., vol. ii., p. 8 ; London, 1739 : 'The fitness of Christ to be a Redeemer of His people is worthy of notice : none so fit as He, none fit for it but Himself ; no creature, man, or angel : no man, for all have sinned, and so everyone needs a redeemer from sin, and can neither redeem himself nor any other : nor could an angel redeem any of the sons of men : God has put no trust of this kind in those His servants the angels, knowing that they were unequal to it. Now Christ's fitness for the work of redemption lies in His being God and man in one person. It was the Son of God that was sent to redeem men, Who is of the same nature, and possessed of the same perfections His Divine Father is, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.'

part to explain the mysterious plan of man's redemption through the wondrous agency of the Cross of Christ :

We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory :

Which none of the princes of this world knew : for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Unwittingly, therefore, even the powers of evil were conducive to the working out of the scheme of man's salvation !

There is, then, wherein to glory in the Cross of Christ !

For is not that Cross the true sign and symbol of your redemption ?

Therefore, you also must say just as the Apostle said of old :

God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

‘ For before your eyes is ever held one picture— one image. It throws its shadow, so to say, across the Gospel history ; it gives a tone of intensity to all the Church's work and struggle in the vicissitudes of her changeful life. In the lowliest homes the thought of it has often brought strange comfort ; in the stateliest palaces it has added

quiet seriousness to life. It has penetrated the darkest recesses of our moral nature, like a ray of sunlight piercing an ocean-haunted cave; it has given a new meaning, added a new dignity, to suffering; it has had power to ennoble pain; it has taught fresh secrets in social life. Those once despised because of poverty have gained by it a position, and command a tribute of loving care.

‘It has revived and transfigured the energies of art. In the stateliest cathedrals of Europe, amid coloured marbles and processions of sculptured saints, it stands in symbol above the altar, or gazes out in fresco from the walls, and around it always sheds a tone of solemn calm.

The peasant on the wild rocks, by the blue waves of the Cornice, looks at it in reverence. The worn Christian in the narrow alley of the crowded town remembers it with joy.

‘It is the witness of love, the revelation of sorrow, the promise of pardon, the symbol of self-sacrifice, the picture, the image, the memory, the thought of a never-exhausted power—Jesus crucified.’

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the Cross of Christ my God ;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

See from His Head, His Hands, His Feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down :
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?

To Christ, Who won for sinners grace
By bitter pain and anguish sore,
Be praise from all the ransomed race
For ever and for evermore.

III

Finally, it may be well to consider the famous Battle of the Milvian Bridge beside the walls of Rome, one of the most decisive battles in the whole history of the world ; for in this great conflict the sign of the Cross played no unimportant part. By it the Empire became Christian.

Some of you, perchance, have paced the marble halls of the Palace of the Vatican. Some of you, perchance, have paused before the vast fresco of this fierce battle scene, in the noble chambers known as the Stanze of Raffael, a perfect gallery of the highest triumphs of the painter's soft and delicate art.

Amidst the dense crowd of mighty warriors, the noble figure of the Emperor Constantine on his

fine charger at once arrests attention and claims entire admiration.

The complete superiority of the Conqueror, by means of the mystic token of the Cross borne aloft by angel's hands in the clear sky, contrasts finely with the miserable plight of Maxentius overwhelmed in the chill waters of the yellow Tiber, with his distressed steed sinking under him in the gurgling flood just as he had all but reached the secure foothold of the further bank. On all sides, in every place, his devoted followers share his own cruel fate. Swords, and shields, and spears, and helmets are let fall, and are washed away. Dead bodies of horses and of men are carried down by the stream. On the Milvian Bridge, on the broad plain, in the hurrying waters of the river, the resistless troops of Constantine strike down their helpless foe, fired to an unearthly courage (as was said) by the heavenly portent. Above the Roman eagle on the military standard of the victor appears the Christian Cross. 'By this sign I conquer.' Constantine secures the Empire, and is the first Christian Emperor of the world.

This striking fresco was actually executed by Giulio Romano, under orders given by Clement VII., from designs by Raffael. The

die is cast.* Henceforth the banner of the Cross of Christ has ever been borne aloft above the nations of Europe, and we believe will be so borne until the end of time.

At certain seasons that heavenly banner may be more in sight than at other times, but it has never yet been altogether invisible, whenso'er the eye of faith gazes fixedly upward to the majestic figure of Christ at God's right hand—the Holy Lamb slain and offered up for the sake of all mankind.

Well did the Apostle indite those words as a kind of motto for every Christian man :

‘God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

Not only in that wonderful battle, which in one day decided the fate of the civilized world in the fourth century, but also on many a more recent occasion, the banner of the Cross has proved the sign of victory. More especially was this the case, as is so well known, in the fervent days of the Crusades, when many a noble knight, in his

* As a modern writer has well observed : ‘No other composition of Raffael contains such a variety of figures, such powerful and vigorous action, such animation and spirit in every part of the picture. It represents the moment when Maxentius in his retreat is driven into the Tiber by Constantine, whose white horse rushes forward as if partaking of the energy of his rider.’

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ardent desire to recover the Holy Sepulchre, left all the comforts of home and family, and served right loyally and right faithfully under the banner of the Cross, in strange and foreign lands, beneath the burning rays of the Syrian sun. Indeed, the bright fires of religious enthusiasm then enkindled are among the most precious memories that have come down to this present century from the stirring days of old, when the sublime ensign of the Cross was plainly uplifted as the banner of the nations of Europe.

Time and space alike forbid any attempt on the present occasion to set forth the quaint halo of spiritual glory that surrounds so many a brilliant record of Crusading faith and love.

Suffice it to remember :

The knight's sword is rust ;
His soul is with the saints, I trust.

As Dean Milman has well observed :

The Crusades have been called, and justly, the heroic age of Christianity. . . . It had all the violence, the rudeness, but also the grandeur, the valour, daring, endurance, self sacrifice, wonderful achievements, the development of strength, even of craft, which belongs to such a period : the wisdom of Godfrey of Boulogne, the gallantry of Tancred of Hauteville, the subtlety of Raimond of Toulouse ; in later times the rivalry of the more barbarous Richard of England with the more courteous and polished Saladin.*

* Milman's 'Latin Christianity,' vol. iii., p. 237.

Yet in humbler and less-known districts of Europe the sign of the Cross has in like manner been the motive power of human life. Visit, if you will, the remote seaport town of Gihon, in the North of Spain, on the rock-bound coast of the Bay of Biscay, washed by the wild Atlantic wave, and the first object to attract attention in the large central square, near the old harbour, will be the fine statue of an early warrior King, beneath whose sculptured effigy will be found these striking words :

Hoc vincit signum, vincet per sæcula Christi.
His armis cinctus, carpe, viator, iter.

DIVINE WORSHIP

ARGUMENT

The worship of God is necessary for the soul of man.

- I. The need of worship.
- II. The spirituality of worship.
- III. The true worship.
- IV. The continuity of worship.



DIVINE WORSHIP

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.

S. JOHN iv. 20.

I

WORSHIP in some form or other is an absolute necessity for the due growth of the spiritual life of every intelligent person. In fact, as the finer and nobler capacities of each man is developed, the real need of worship is more keenly felt, and the comfort and consolation thereof more fully realized.

The serious, calm, reasonable worship of the Almighty is found to be that which the soul craves for, without which the soul cannot rest satisfied. In the worship of God, in the turning of the spirit from earth to heaven, in the submission of the will to that one higher Power which can guide and direct it in the right way, there is rest and satisfaction. As the Psalmist has well

said : ' My soul truly waiteth still upon God, for of Him cometh my salvation.' And again : ' My soul hath a desire and a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.' And yet once again : ' Praise the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, praise His holy name.'

In such words as these, so full of beauty and devotion, King David so nobly expresses the absolute necessity which he felt laid upon him to lift up his soul from time to time to something that was immeasurably higher and greater than himself, even to the mighty God of Israel.

Moreover, some such sentiment also stirred the heart of the woman of Samaria, as she talked with Jesus by the well. Recall to mind, if you will, the opening scene of that ever-memorable conversation. The day is hot. The sun's rays are piercing in that warm Eastern clime. Our Saviour Christ, wearied with His journey through the sultry air, is seated by Jacob's well for rest and refreshment—that ancient well ' which our father Jacob gave us, and drank thereof himself, his children, and his cattle.'

And as the Saviour is seated there by that cool, refreshing well, a simple country-woman comes to draw water, and thus in the most natural way the

conversation begins between these two characters so diverse and so different in every way.

Very natural as well as very picturesque is this simple scene of Eastern life, and profound as well as deep in solemn import is the teaching of the conversation that ensued.

The country-woman showed how, after her own fashion and in her own rustic way, she was looking for the coming of the Messiah, the Saviour of her race, the Teacher of the nations, the Anointed of the Lord ; and, on the other hand, Christ revealed Himself to her in all the fulness of His mercy and His grace, as that Saviour and Teacher whose coming the prophets foretold, and directed her thoughts and mind to spiritual things.

Worship was, indeed, absolutely needful for the proper development of the higher life of man, and the supreme truth of this great fact has been acknowledged in all ages, not only within the limits of the Christian Church, but also by the whole race of mankind ; not only by the ascetic devotee, but also by the stirring men of action in this present century.

If King David was frequent in his attendance at the courts of the Lord, and Daniel, the busy administrator of the Babylonian king, yet found time to pray three times a day with his face

towards Jerusalem, we find also our own African explorer, Henry M. Stanley, resorting to earnest prayer in his hour of direst need. Here are his own words upon this important subject: 'Constrained at the darkest hour to humbly confess that without God's help I was helpless, I vowed a vow in the forest solitude that I would confess His aid before men. A silence as of death was round about me; it was midnight. I was weakened by illness, prostrated with fatigue, and worn with anxiety for my white and black companions, whose fate was a mystery. In this physical and mental distress I besought God to give me back my people.'

'Nine hours later we were exulting with a rapturous joy. In full view of all was the crimson flag with the crescent, and beneath its waving folds the long-lost rear column.'

Here, then, is an example from modern life of a man of energy and action who, like the kings and prophets of old, felt the need and necessity, and realized the comfort and help, of prayer to God.

Moreover, it is well to mark how acceptable prayer and worthy worship possesses at least two

main characteristics, namely, lofty spirituality and absolute truth.

Reading the fourth chapter of S. John's Gospel, you will readily see how Jesus Christ Himself, in His wonderful conversation with the woman of Samāria, insists upon the importance of these two points, how He raises the woman's spirit up to a higher sphere. 'Woman,' saith He, 'believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.' . . . 'God is a spirit : and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Can words be found better to express the lofty spirituality of the best kind of worship ?

Mark, also, how the Saviour urges on the woman of Samaria the absolute necessity of turning away from the imperfect worship of Samaria to the perfect adoration of the true and only God—to the sublime worship, given from the depth of the heart, in spirit and in truth : for 'the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' The old worship and the old prayers, to which she had been accustomed, must give way to the new and more spiritual worship of Jesus Christ, in order to bring about the regeneration of the world and the salvation of men.

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And this spirituality of Christian worship has in all ages been dwelt upon by the noblest* religious teachers and by the holiest saints of God.

In modern times the beautiful thought has been well expressed by James Montgomery :

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed ;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Brethren, let me urge upon you in these latter days to keep strictly to this holy and spiritual faith once for all delivered to the saints in olden time, not to deviate therefrom in any degree, but to receive in all its fulness and simplicity the sacred words of life. We may not, indeed, be able to understand all that is meant by our Lord's life and death, but we can surely believe that it was for us and for our salvation that He left His heavenly home above the bright blue sky, and

* *Cf.* S. Basil : ' Psalmody makes fair weather for the soul. Psalmody is the arbiter of peace. Psalmody is the fast welder of friendship. For who can bring himself to regard any longer as an enemy one with whom he has lifted up his voice in harmony in the praise and worship of God?' (Works, i. 90; Paris edit., 1721).

Cf. Shakespeare :

' Heaven set ope thy everlasting gates
To entertain my vows of thanks and praise.'

dwelt among the sons of men three-and-thirty years, and suffered all the pains of death on Calvary's cross !

III

In the second place, Divine worship which can completely satisfy all the manifold wants of man must in itself be true ; and such worship as this can only be found in the pure religion of Jesus Christ.

The elaborate mythology of the East, with its strange ritual and various degrees of caste ; the heroic poems of classical ages, that charmed the cultured Greek and masterful Roman ;* the mysterious Egyptian devotion, with its powerful priesthood and magnificent temples, in part supplied, but in part failed to supply, man's greatest and most important need—a true revelation of God.

These old-world forms of religion gave some kind of satisfaction to man's natural craving for worship, and thus helped to prepare the way of Christ ; but they one and all were unable to tell man anything definite concerning the Divine nature of the one true God and His compassionate relation to mankind ; they could not

* Cf. Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 882 :

‘Heu miserande puer ! si qua fata aspera rumpas,
Tu Marcellus eris.’

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explain how the sacrifices for sin, due for man's transgression, were done away by the sublime sacrifice of Christ; how, in short, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' Yet these ancient religions, both by their curious teaching and their ominous omissions, helped to prepare the whole world for the due reception of Christian doctrine. Effete and worn out, both in form and substance, they seemed to admit, by their very failure to influence the actions of men, that there was something further wanted to crown the sacred edifice of religion, and to make the whole system of teaching and belief complete and perfect.

And, indeed, we find ample proof of this simple fact in the actual words of the woman of Samaria. She seemed in part prepared to hear of some great change in the main principles of religion: 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain: ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.'

The allusion, indeed, is doubtless to an old controversy, waged during long years in Palestine. For the old-fashioned people of Samaria who had clung for centuries to their own rites and ritual with a strange tenacity, were looked down upon by all the followers of the more orthodox and elaborate

ceremonies practised in Jerusalem ; and when the late Dean Stanley accompanied King Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, on a tour through the Holy Land, he has left on record how he was present with the Prince at the last remnants of this Samaritan worship, still celebrated by a handful of peasants on the mountain-top.

Yet the woman of Samaria, when she meets Jesus Christ, is in part prepared to admit that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship, the holy city chosen of God, and consecrated to His service by many centuries of past devotion. And from the lips of Christ she learns the true nature of the new religion—not exactly as she had thought or expected, but higher and nobler and better—not centred in Samaria or Jerusalem, but in the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. This religion, based on the faith once for all delivered to the saints, was irresistible, universal,* must endure unto the end of time. This religion was the true revelation of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of the sons of men. This religion was possessed of the true principles of faith, and contained within

* The famous German historian, Leopold von Ranke, speaks of the Christian religion as the ‘universal religion.’

itself that supernatural force that should conquer the world. And so it has ever been the earnest desire of theological teachers to preserve intact the absolute purity of the faith, to hand on to future generations in all perfection the sacred deposit which they have received from the first ages of Christianity.

Within our own Church of England we find great teachers arising in the course of the last thirteen hundred years, of the most different character and diverse calibre, yet all alike prominent leaders of religious thought, devout members of the self-same Church, and devoted followers of Jesus Christ. How true is this if we compare S. Augustine of Canterbury and Theodore of Tarsus with Archbishop Lanfranc and S. Anselm; or if we contrast Archbishop Warham and Cardinal Wolsey with Archbishop Cranmer and Latimer, or Dean Colet and Bishop Fox of Winchester. Or, to pass on to another and later age, we may note the same remarkable contrast when we set side by side the notable career of Archbishop Laud and Bishop Andrewes, and Williams, Archbishop of York, and Lord Chancellor. In like manner we may well compare Archbishop Juxon, who walked with King Charles I. to the scaffold, and just lived to crown

King Charles II., with Bishop Cosin, who played so important a part in the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer in the joyous days of the Restoration; while in the nineteenth century we honour with peculiar honour such distinguished men as Wilberforce and Liddon, Lightfoot and Westcott, Creighton and Stubbs.

One beautiful thought, indeed, connected with the English Church is the long line of noble examples of Christian heroism and Christian devotion stored up in the Christian annals of our land. And when we consider that all these great men were agreed upon the essential points in the Christian faith, believing in the efficacy of Christ's blood for man's salvation, and the sublime activities of the Three Persons in the Ever-blessed Trinity, though they expressed in varying forms of speech the great truths of faith, and approached the study of the revelation of God from different points of view,* we are at once reminded of John Keble's thoughtful lines :

* It may, perhaps, herein be possible to see in some measure how individual thought may have free scope without in consequence marring the unity of Christendom, or breaking the bond of love which Christ intended should exist between all His disciples. Contemplating the Church of England from this particular point of view, a well-known modern writer has strikingly observed: 'You will do wrong—mankind will do wrong—if it allows to drop out of

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Three solemn parts together twine
In harmony's mysterious line :
Three solemn aisles approach the shrine.

Yet all are one—together all,
In thoughts that awe but not appal,
Teach the adoring heart to fall.

Pondering over John Keble's words, our very notion of the sacred doctrine of the Holy Trinity becomes entwined around the parish church in which we habitually worship.

IV

'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.'

The mind of the speaker travelled back across long vistas of past years. The fathers in the solemn act of worship passed in vision across the scene before the mind's eye. There was a gentle comfort in the simple thought that departed ancestors, now sleeping the heavy sleep of death, had been accustomed to worship God in the same place, in the self-same way. Following the mighty dead, one could not greatly err.

existence, merely because to some men its position seems to be illogical, an agency by which the devotional instincts of human nature are enabled to exist side by side with the rational. . . . As a Church it is unique : nothing like it can ever take its place.'

And assuredly men and women do well to set great store by this high principle of continuity in religious worship. For thus an effectual link is firmly forged between the great and good men of olden time and our own little day; thus the Church militant here on earth is indissolubly united to the Church triumphant in heaven.

The memory,* too, of those who have departed this life in the faith of Christ, and now rest in the quiet churchyard awaiting the day of resurrection, is recalled by those who are yet fighting the fierce battle, and striving to win the everlasting crown. Who is there in this church to-day who cannot go forth into God's acre,† and, beneath

* *Cf.* James Montgomery, 'Poems,' vol. iv., p. 338:

'Her path was like the shining light,
Clear, calm, progressive, perfect day:
At eventide came sudden night,
Thick darkness fell on all her way.'

† *Cf.* Longfellow, 'Voices of the Night,' p. 22, edit. 1866:

'With a slow and noiseless footstep
Comes that messenger Divine,
Takes the vacant chair beside me,
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

'And she sits and gazes at me
With those deep and tender eyes,
Like the stars, so still and saintlike,
Looking downward from the skies.

the shadow of this venerable pile, gaze upon the cold marble tomb, and vividly recall to mind the very form and feature, the very spirit of life, which once animated the dust contained therein? What memories of love! What noble example of charity and faith! What holy beam of celestial light on that aged face made meet by suffering for the heavenly kingdom! Shall not the children arise up and call her blessed, who has trained up her beloved offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! Shall not such tender memories as these hallow daily life and consecrate the soul to God! Shall they not put away all thought of sin and wickedness, and lift up the heart into the very presence chamber of the Lord!

‘Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.’

Here also shall be our place of worship. Here also shall we find the house of God and the gate

‘Uttered not, yet comprehended,
Is the spirit’s voiceless prayer;
Soft rebukes, in blessings ended,
Breathing from her lips of air.

‘Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died!’

of heaven. Here also shall our souls rest in peace before the altar of the Lord.

For is it not written?—

And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And He shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

‘Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.’

For more than a thousand years our own fathers have worshipped in the noble cathedrals and divers parish churches of our land. Shall not these self-same holy places, consecrated by the sacred associations of past ages, be also our own houses of prayer, wherein we bow the knee in all solemnity before the Lord our Maker? Shall they not serve as our earthly homes of spiritual refreshment during the weary pilgrimage through this present world to the bright land of everlast-

* Isa. ii. 2-5.

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ing life? Shall not our love for them, and our affection, be intensified, when we recollect that within these sacred walls the Cross of Christ was signed upon our forehead in baptism, and we were thereby admitted into the membership of the Church; that for many a true believer the marriage vow was here taken before the altar of God, and the heavenly benediction pronounced by the priest of the Lord; and that the day will come, though none know the time thereof, when our mortal remains shall be greeted at the church porch with the words of the patriarch Job: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth'—when our bodies shall be laid in the cold tomb, awaiting the happy resurrection of the just?

Oh, shall we not say with all the fervour of a thankful heart:

We love the place, O God,
Wherein Thine honour dwells;
The joy of Thine abode
All earthly joy excels.

It is the house of prayer,
Wherein Thy servants meet;
And Thou, O Lord, art there
Thy chosen flock to greet.

We love to sing below
For mercies freely given;
But, oh, we long to know
The triumph-song of heaven!

THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

ARGUMENT

The early Church provides the best model for the proper organization of the body of Christ in all ages.

- I. The birthday of the Church of Christ.
- II. The high authority for episcopacy.
- III. The two Sacraments generally necessary for salvation :
 - (*a*) Holy Baptism.
 - (*b*) The Holy Communion.



THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.—ACTS ii. 42.

THE brief but striking words of this text set forth in a clear and precise way the actual result of S. Peter's stirring sermon on the Day of Pentecost. That great day has been well called the birthday of the Church of Christ, because on that marvellous occasion there was a fresh out-pouring of the Spirit of God upon the Apostles—because in the renewed strength of that Divine gift the Apostles were enabled to go forth and preach the Gospel to the whole world.

Contrast, if you will, the description of the out-pouring of the Spirit given in the second chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles with similar passages in the Old Testament, and you will at once see that the actual point of such a

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contrast is well set forth in the words of the familiar hymn :

When God of old came down from heaven,
In power and wrath He came ;
Before His feet the clouds were riven,
Half darkness and half flame.

But when He came the second time,
He came in power and love ;
Softer than gale at morning prime
Hover'd His holy Dove.

The fires, that rush'd on Sinai down
In sudden torrents dread,
Now gently light a glorious crown,
On every sainted head.

Very gently, very softly the Holy Spirit came, yet with a life and a power that was felt among men. As S. John says: 'When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth.'

Our Lord Himself, as Canon Liddon has pointed out in one of his famous sermons preached before the University of Oxford, compares the action of the Divine and Eternal Spirit to the wind. There is beauty and freedom, there is also mystery and reserve, in this comparison.

'The wind is an agent about whose proceedings we really know almost nothing. Thou hearest the sound thereof: such is our Lord's concession to man's claim to knowledge. Thou canst not

tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : such is the reserve which He makes in respect of human ignorance. . . . Our Lord says, "Thou hearest the sound thereof." He would have us test it by the most spiritual of the senses. It whispers, or it moans, or it roars as it passes : it has a pathos all its own. Yet what do we really know about it ? Thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. Does the wind, then, obey no rule ; is it a mere symbol of unfettered caprice ? Surely not. If, as the Psalmist sings, "God bringeth the wind out of His treasures," He acts, we may be sure, here as always, whether in nature or in grace, by some law, which His own perfections impose upon His action.*

It is indeed true that, though the Holy Ghost, in the marvellous bestowal of the spiritual gift, might pass by 'the varied learning and high station of the Sanhedrim, He breathed where He listed on the peasants of Galilee. He breathed on them a power which would shake the world.'

And so in some mysterious sense, not perhaps very easily understood, yet for all that very real and very strong, the Holy Spirit of God descended upon the sacred heads of the Apostles, that they might possess a more perfect utterance of the

* Canon Liddon's 'University Sermons,' vol. ii., p. 81.

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Divine mysteries, that their preaching might the better bear conviction to the souls of men, that they might bestow upon and hand down to generations yet unborn the spiritual gift which they had themselves received.

Thus their humble prayer ever was :

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire ;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessèd unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love ;
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight.

Or, as we say in our own Communion Service on Whit-Sunday :

The Holy Ghost came down from heaven with a sudden great sound, as it had been a mighty wind, in the likeness of fiery tongues, lighting upon the Apostles, to teach them, and to lead them to all truth ; giving them both the gift of divers languages, and also boldness with fervent zeal constantly to preach the Gospel unto all nations ; whereby we have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of Thee, and of Thy Son Jesus Christ.

And, as we know, the Church thus established by the highest spiritual authority has continued to the present day ; and, as we believe, will continue to the end of time. As the holy Apostles themselves passed away, having won the crown

of glory, other men were duly appointed to take their place, to direct the affairs of the Church in troublous days, to uphold the banner of the Cross before an astonished world, to hand on the torch of truth to the generations of men that were yet to come. As we read in the First Epistle of S. Paul to Timothy: 'This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work'; and in the Second Epistle S. Paul gives this solemn charge to Timothy, who was the first Bishop of Ephesus, that noble city on the sea-coast of Asia Minor: 'I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.' 'Hold fast the form of sound doctrine, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' And again in the last chapter of this same Epistle: 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. . . . Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have

kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' That crown was won, as we know, when with one fell swoop the cruel sword of Nero's executioner dashed off the Apostle's head, and left the bleeding corpse to be carried by pious women without the walls of Rome, and silently buried in a damp and marshy meadow beside the yellow Tiber. On a careful examination of the actual words of Holy Writ, it seems clear that S. Paul himself definitely appointed Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, and when the time of his own martyrdom drew nigh, he deemed that the actual responsibilities of Timothy's position would be materially increased.* And the bishopric† thus founded by the

* Cf. Knox-Little, 'Manchester Sermons,' p. 261: 'Timothy he had loved with a peculiar affection. Of all the dear souls finding a place in that large heart, none was so closely and so strongly clasped as Timothy. The old man's whole being went out to this his own dear son—him he loved with a manly vigour and a womanlike tenderness: we almost feel his warm tears fall as he writes to the Philippians of him, "There is not one like him."'

† The author is well aware that the duties and privileges of a Bishop in the Primitive Church differed very materially from those appertaining to a Bishop in the Church of England in the twentieth century, and that upon this material difference some scholars have sought to establish a total distinction of office. Yet how greatly does the position of a Colonial Bishop or a Scottish Bishop differ at the present

Apostle in the town which in former days was given over to the worship of Diana receives distinct mention in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation :

Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write : These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks :

I know Thy works, and Thy patience, and how Thou canst not bear them that are evil.

Yet this high tone of exalted praise is not maintained in the verses that follow, and the real

time from the position of an English Archbishop ! Yet all are equally Bishops. Again, what a tremendous contrast there is between the actual power exercised by a Bishop such as S. Hugh of Lincoln, or S. Anselm of Canterbury in the Middle Ages, and the present Bishop of London ! Yet all are equally Bishops.

Compare with the modern conception of the duties of a Bishop the remarkable provision of the Justinian Code, which so long prevailed in Constantinople, whereby it was made a part of the episcopal function to visit every month the State prisons to inquire into the offences of all persons committed, and to admonish the civil authorities to proceed according to law. The Bishop was also empowered to order illegal places of confinement to be broken open, and the prisoners set free.

In each city the Bishop with the three chief citizens annually inspected the public accounts, and all possessions or bequests made for public works, markets, aqueducts, baths, walls, gates, and bridges. In his presence guardians of lunatics swore on the Gospels to administer their trust in good faith, and many important legal acts were performed either in his presence or before the Defensor of the city.

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truth seems to be that the Church over which Timothy was called to preside in the early days of Christianity possessed weak points as well as strong, in much the same way as the Church of these latter days.

It is pertinent, however, here to remark that we must not fail to note the clear Scriptural authority for the establishment and maintenance of the Christian episcopate, which for fifteen centuries after the death of Christ was the actual method of Church government adopted throughout the civilized world. In fact, without reference to the storm and strife of the Reformation, and the strange bitterness of the violent passions then aroused, it would be quite impossible to account for the existing fact that so large a number of those who profess and call themselves Christians have thought fit to reject the form of Church government adopted in the earliest ages of the faith, and apparently sanctioned by Christ Himself. Moreover, thoughtful students of ecclesiastical history will readily perceive that, on certain famous occasions in the startling records of those sad days of fierce conflict, the peculiar circumstances of the times rather than the deliberate intention of the religious leaders brought about the final rejection of episcopacy.

In this particular matter the wise conduct of the Church of England is worthy of all praise. In days of chaos and confusion, when violent reforms, both good and bad, were in the atmosphere that men breathed, her rulers possessed the wisdom and sagacity to preserve the ancient form of Church government adopted in Apostolic* times, and consecrated by the religious sanction of long ages.

From the contemplation of the appointed rulers of the Church, let us turn to the people themselves. Now, the simple words of the text quite plainly sets forth the chief characteristics of these primitive followers of Christ.

‘Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

‘And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.’

Five characteristics, then, of their usual conduct and manner of life are here noted, all of them

* As a modern writer says :

‘From the earliest years of the second century Bishop is the distinctive name adopted as such in every language used by Christians, Eastern as well as Western, of the single president of a diocese, who came in the room of the Apostles, having presbyters, deacons, and laity under him.’

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essential characteristics of a true and living Church : (1) Holy Baptism ; (2) the teaching of the Apostles ; (3) unity ; (4) the Holy Communion ; (5) devout worship.

Two of these notes of a true Church are distinguished from the rest as being of Christ's own institution, and of these we now propose to speak more particularly, for we have dealt with the other three on different occasions.

Now, Holy Baptism* was the gate by which each new convert gained admission into the body of Christ. At once the individual thus duly admitted became a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. And the excellent foundation thus securely laid became quite sufficient to bear the needful superstructure. Here in this rite of Holy Baptism the child 'is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church.' He is given the Holy Spirit that 'he may be born again and made an heir of everlasting salvation.' By this simple rite of Holy Baptism, ordained by Christ Himself, the Christian is marked off or separated from other men, and pledged by a solemn vow to fight manfully

* As Hooker says, 'The Sacraments are means effectual, whereby God, when we take the Sacraments, delivereth into our hands that grace available unto eternal life, which grace the Sacraments represent or signify.'

under the banner of Christ, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto the end of life. Herein is the badge or sign of the Christian man's profession, the positive witness to a careless world of his spiritual position. The general value and result of Holy Baptism has been stated with great accuracy by Hooker :

Baptism was instituted that they which receive the same might thereby be incorporated into Christ, and so through His most precious merit obtain as well that saving grace of imputation which taketh away all former guiltiness, as also that infused Divine virtue of the Holy Ghost, which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of life.

In like manner, our own twenty-seventh Article declares that amongst the actual benefits received in Baptism, 'the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed.'

We must remember also that Jesus Christ gave His special sanction to the rite of Baptism, not only by direct precept, but also by positive example ; and all the interesting details of His own baptism are recorded in the sacred pages of Holy Writ. Furthermore, His last commands to the Apostles on the solemn occasion of His Ascension were to go forth and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

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In token that thou shalt not fear
Christ crucified to own,
We print the Cross upon thy brow
And stamp thee His alone.

In token that thou too shalt tread
The path He travelled by,
Endure the Cross, despise the shame,
And sit thee down on high.

Thus visibly and outwardly
We seal* thee for His own;
And may the brow that wears His Cross
Hereafter share His Crown !

Moreover, as the real foundation of the spiritual life was laid in Holy Baptism, so the true completion thereof must be sought in that other Sacrament ordained by Christ Himself for 'the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of His death, and the benefits which we receive thereby.'

As that striking hymn so well says :

Once, only once, and once for all,
His precious life He gave ;
Before the Cross our spirits fall,
And own it strong to save.

For as the priest of Aaron's line
Within the Holiest stood,
And sprinkled all the mercy shrine
With sacrificial blood ;

* By an early Father, Clemens Alexandrinus, baptism is spoken of as 'the seal of the Lord.' Also the sign of the Cross is called by early writers the seal of the Christian covenant, or spiritual circumcision.

So He, Who once atonement wrought,
Our Priest of endless power,
Presents Himself for those He bought
In that dark noontide hour.

And by means of the instrumentality of that Holy Sacrament our 'souls are strengthened and refreshed' by Christ's Body and Blood, 'which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.'

This central idea, indeed, of the marvellous benefits conferred upon the faithful in the Holy Eucharist has been a favourite subject for the artist's skill.

Enter, if you will, the great Church of S. Dominic in the lovely old town of Siena, in the southern parts of Tuscany, and carefully study therein the grand masterpiece of the famous painter Sodoma, the latest and the best exponent of the renowned Sienese school of art.

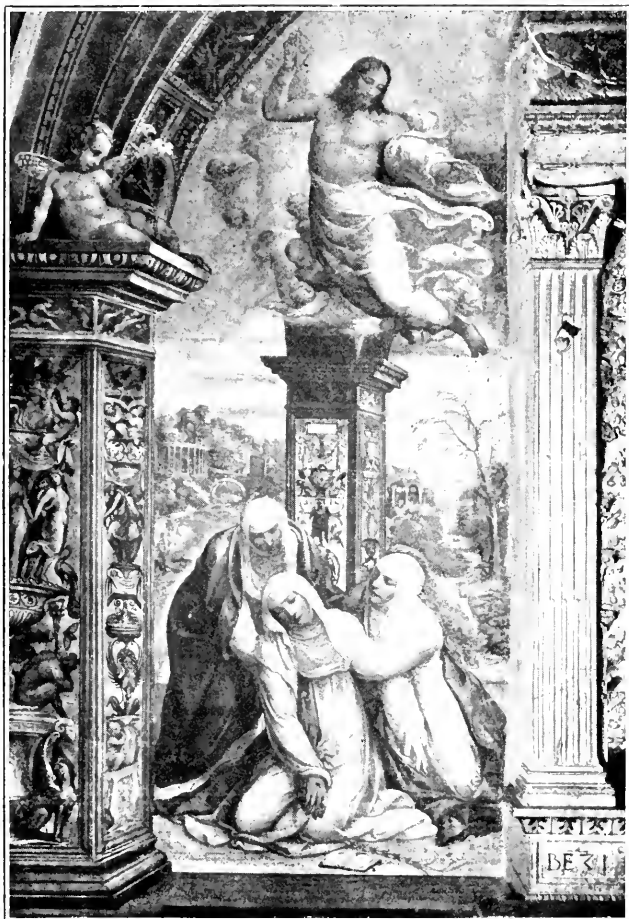
The marvellous picture consists of two great compartments. In one of these we behold Saint Catherine fainting away under the heavy burden of the Church's work, the long-sustained effort that for the time at least seemed to be in vain, the lonely vigil spent in earnest prayer and constant striving with the Almighty, the bodily strength subdued by the ascetic Lenten fast ; or

as some writers declare, when she receives the stigmata :—all consciousness is just ebbing away,* and the gentle, worn face is assuming a calm, placid expression of perfect peace.

In the other compartment we see an angel from heaven descending from the presence chamber of God, bearing the Holy Sacrament in outstretched hands for the succour and relief, the strengthening and refreshing, of the soul of the saint on earth. Marvellously beautiful is the expression of the face of the saint at the moment when she first catches sight of the angel of the Lord and the spiritual means of grace descending from on high. That feebleness and nervelessness of the soul at once is gone, and a new light of faith and love enlivens that beautiful careworn face, even the light of the glory of God, that shineth more and more ũnto the perfect day.

And this beautiful painting of Sodoma is but

* Augustus Hare declares the swoon of S. Catherine with Christ appearing above in glory, is ‘an indescribably beautiful picture.’ In Jameson’s ‘Monastic Orders,’ p. 394, we read : ‘Here S. Catherine and her companions wear the white tunic and scapulary, without the black mantle—an omission favourable to the general effect of the colour, which is at once most delicate, rich, and harmonious ; and the beauty of the faces, the expression of tender anxiety and reverence in the nuns, the Divine languor on the pallid features of S. Catherine, render this fresco one of the marvels of art.’



THE SWOON OF S. CATHERINE.

one example amongst the far-famed old masters of Italian art, which sets forth with consummate skill the supreme value of the Holy Eucharist in strengthening and refreshing the spiritual life.

To take another and different illustration : You may remember the stirring song of our own greatest poet in the nineteenth century, when he tells how Sir Galahad saw the Holy Grail descending on the shrine :

And never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, failed from my side, nor come
Covered, but moving with me night and day—
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blackened marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain-top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere ;
And passed through Pagan realms, and made them mine ;
And clashed with Pagan hordes, and bore them down ;
And broke through all, and in the strength of this
Came victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go : and one will crown me King
Far in the spiritual city : and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go.

Recall to mind, if you will, the notable words of our own Lord Chancellor Bacon :

I have loved Thy assemblies, I have mourned for the divisions of Thy Church, I have delighted in the brightness of Thy Sanctuary, I have sought Thee in courts, in fields and gardens, but I have found Thee in Thy Temple.

Both time and space forbid any further attempt to make more complete this very brief description of the spiritual benefit of this Holy Sacrament.* Suffice it to say that amongst the primitive followers of Jesus Christ, in the earliest ages of the Christian faith, it formed the central act of devotional worship. Each Christian loved to receive the 'body given' and the 'blood shed' on his or her behalf, and, in answer to the earnest prayer of faith, found therein the strengthening and refreshing of the soul for life's hard warfare, and the true viaticum on the sad occasion of the last long journey to the unknown world beyond the grave.

And what was true in distant days of yore is true also in this present age, whensoever the troubled and wearied soul of man finds absolute rest and peace in the spiritual presence of the Lord, before the sacred altar of the Most High God.

Strikingly writes an author of high repute belonging to the nineteenth century:

'The mystic glimmer of the sacred tapers in the shaded chapels and the concluding strains of the

* Cf. the famous words of Bishop Andrewes, 'Responsio ad Bellarm.,' p. 13: 'Præsentiam credimus non minus quam vos veram: de modo præsentiae nihil temere definimus, addo, nec anxie inquirimus.'

chanting filled the church with half light and half shadow, half silence and half sound, very pleasing and soothing to the sense.

‘The low melancholy *Miserere*—half entreating and half desponding—spoke to the heart of man a language like its own; and as the theme was taken up by the organ, the builder’s art and the musician’s melted into one, in tier after tier of carved imagery, wave after wave of mystic sound.

‘All conscious thought and striving seemed to fade from the heart, and before the altar and amid the swell of sound the soul lost itself, and lay silent and passive on the Eternal Love.’

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

ARGUMENT

Faith, which is eminently reasonable, offers a good hope for the soul of man, and clear evidence of the unseen.

I. The reasonableness of faith.

II. The effect of faith.

α Moses.

β S. Stephen.

γ The saints of God.



THE FAITH OF CHRIST

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—HEB. xi. 1.

IN this remarkable description of faith there is, so to say, a certain solidarity which appears to be in striking contrast to ordinary modern ideas.

If anyone were to ask you in Biblical language, ‘Hast thou faith?’ assuredly your answer would hardly be, ‘I have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’; for the popular conception of faith is something more vague and indefinite—a religious feeling, a spiritual sentiment, a comfortable species of general belief.

How curiously is the faint echo of this strange sentiment heard in some of the best poetry of our own age!

Musing on the vast distance, in time and space, in thought and feeling, between God and man, Matthew Arnold plaintively—yea, sadly—sings :

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Now Christ is dead. Far hence He lies
In the lorn Syrian town,
And on His grave with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down.

And in the same kind of spirit our great Poet Laureate, Lord Tennyson, wrote with even deeper dreaminess and more utter vagueness :

I falter where I firmly trod,
And, falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

We find also, from a slightly different point of view, the same kind of sentiment expressed in those sharp, clear-cut lyrics penned not very long ago by Auberon Herbert :

In the glory of youth the young man went,
His heart with pride was stirred :
'They should yield,' he cried, 'to the message sent,
And force of the burning word.'

The long years passed, and a wearied man
Crept back to the old home door :
'I have spoken my word, and none has heard ;
And the great world rolls as before.'

As in poetical so also in prose writers this strange Gospel of modified despair is charac-

teristic of our own time. Men strive to build again, with what measure of success I cannot tell, a huge altar to the unknown God. The powerful aid of philosophy and science are eagerly sought to prop up the fabric, and they answer to the call, perchance with unwilling feet. Yet in popular opinion, if not in the opinion of skilled experts, philosophy and science are deemed to be in opposition to revealed religion. Faith is supposed to be in some sort of conflict with reason. But were it not more true to say, if faith in the widest sense be beyond reason, yet it is also eminently reasonable?

‘Certainly,’ cries Canon Liddon in a famous sermon preached before the University of Oxford*—‘certainly the word “faith” is used vaguely enough in these days; and men talk of faith in their destiny, faith in the future, faith in a cause or principle, faith in progress, faith in humanity. If these phrases are taken to pieces, they will be found to mean faith in a will that can bring to pass what men variously conceive to be the highest good in the coming years. We Christians enjoy a wider horizon than any of those which are determined by the limits of sense or the limits

* Liddon’s ‘University Sermons,’ p. 226. Cf. ‘Some Elements of Religion,’ pp. 109, 110.

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of time. We are concerned not merely with the fortunes of our race on this planet, but with the destiny of its individual members in an eternal world. For us the personal God, Who has revealed Himself as threefold in His absolute and unchanging Being, Who as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has disclosed His deepest and most important relations to ourselves, is the object of all that deserves the name of faith.'

There is, in sober truth, a mighty school of famous teachers who, like Canon Liddon, see in faith the highest manifestation of reason. You remember the striking saying of S. Anselm, one of the most distinguished occupants of the See of Canterbury:

Credo ut intelligam.

Or call to mind, if you will, Dantè's gentle song:

*Per voler esser certo
Di quella fede che vinci ogni errore.*

And amongst modern writers of intellectual power and real force, note the clear statement of the Reverend Mark Pattison, sometime Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford:

'In the scholastic philosophy reason and faith were once again reconciled and reunited. And

the reunion was not by concordat, but by fusion. The scholastic philosophy is true to the common principle of all philosophy, in that it sought not a partial account of this or that class of facts, but an explanation which is commensurate with the whole of the known facts. The scholastic philosophy did not exempt any one region of knowledge from its operations.

‘The human intellect is one and simple in all its cognitions. This is the hypothesis on which must rest all scientific theology. . . . If the objects of our religious worship are not apprehensible by our reason, they are not apprehensible at all.’

With these stately and weighty words may well be compared the definition of the German author Schöberlein :

‘Man was made for faith, and faith makes the man. Faith involves knowledge, stirs up the feelings, acts upon the will. Faith, in the absolute sense of the word, is therefore a personal and spiritual union with Christ, through which we become one with Him, as He is one with the Father.’

To this definite statement of Schöberlein, it may be well to add the striking testimony of John Henry Newman :

‘Religious faith is the substance, or the realizing

of what as yet is not here, but only hoped for ; it is the making present what is future. Again, it is "the evidence" of what is not seen—*i.e.*, the ground or medium of proof, on or through which the unseen is accepted as really existing. In the way of nature, we ascertain the things around and before us by sight, and things which are to be by reason ; but faith is our informant about things present which we do not see, and things future which we cannot forecast. And as sight contemplates form and colour, and reason the processes of argument, so faith rests upon the Divine Word as the token and criterion of truth.'

Of such sort, then, is the calm, reasonable faith which forms the true ground and solid foundation of the Christian religion. Though, doubtless, difficult to define* in the words of man's wisdom, yet none the less real and true and powerful, as witnessed to by the marvellous results wrought in the wide world. On its intellectual side,† we find

* For the definition of faith in the Roman Catholic Church, see Concil. Trid., VI., c. vi. Faith is stated to be a conviction that those things are true which God hath revealed and promised, and this especially, that God justifies the impious by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

† The idea of faith becomes fuller and richer as we study the precise use of the word in the long course of Holy Writ. This is especially the case when we examine the construction of *πιστεύω* with prepositions.

a brief but well-nigh complete summary in the Apostles' Creed. In the sphere of action we trace its clear effect on the long page of modern history. For 'faith is the parent of two of the greatest forces that can move the human soul: it produces hope and trust. The man who believes can trust: his faith sees God, and that sight creates confidence.

'The man who trusts can ignore or resist present and visible danger, through his clear perception of an Unseen Protector; and his trust is of itself a force, whether for purposes of action or purposes of resistance. It has been said that the strength of an army is more than doubled when it has general confidence in its commander. To trust in a great power is to share its strength. The success of every enterprise depends mainly on the belief that it will be achieved; and when the present offers nothing but materials for discouragement, hope comes to the aid of trust, and transfigures the present before our eyes with the enthusiasms of the future. And thus out of weakness men and women are made strong; and many a feeble Christian has felt, in the strength of this moral invigoration, of which faith is the source, as he resolutely takes the difficult line of painful or unwelcome duty, that

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*Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.*

For to him it has been said, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth,” even through these magnificent endowments of hope and trust; and he, in his consciousness of mingled strength and weakness, cannot but answer: “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, and puttest them to confusion that hate us.”’

So faith, according to Holy Scripture, is invested with a distinct substance of enduring hope, and provides clear evidence of the unseen world. And such realization of hope, such comprehension of the invisible, has certainly been vouchsafed in all ages to the chosen saints of God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have a long list of those noble men and women—from righteous Abel onwards—who ‘through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens’—that goodly fellowship of saints, that brave army of martyrs, who ‘looked for a city which hath foundations,

whose builder and maker is God.' Of one of these, the prophet Moses, Holy Writ distinctly declares, after a brief review of his unselfish career, 'he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible.' And truly such words well describe the lively faith of God's saints. If Moses thus endured under the Old Covenant, S. Stephen thus endured in a special manner under the New Dispensation. How frequently in his wonderful speech before the Sanhedrim does he quote the noble example of Moses as a leader and teacher of Israel!

'This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

'He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

'This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: Him shall ye hear.*'

And so S. Stephen was a witness of Jesus Christ, just as Moses had been in the olden time. Nay, more, he was the first martyr of Jesus! He

* Acts vii. 35-37.

was the first of that noble band, who counted not their lives dear unto death, but ‘were stoned and sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.’

You remember the particular circumstances of that never-to-be-forgotten day. How, at the end of his lengthy speech of defence, the beatific vision of the King of Kings in His heavenly glory was revealed, and the martyr cried aloud: ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God!’

At the mysterious sight of Christ risen from His heavenly throne to succour His devoted servant, the martyr’s gaze was alone fixed in loftiest contemplation on the unearthly glory.

‘The vast hall of audience, the learned judges on the bench, the rough crowd upon the public pavement, ever ready to rush upon him with unseemly fury—all these things seemed for the moment as though they were not: for he was far away before the audience chamber of the King of Kings, in the presence of a form worn and weary, of a face calm and bleeding, Who for his sake had borne the pain and shame of the Cross, and was set down at the right hand of God.’

Oh, what, if we are Christ's,
Is earthly shame or loss?
Bright shall the crown of glory be
When we have borne the Cross.

Assuredly, in the most literal sense, S. Stephen endured the bitter pains of a cruel death 'as seeing Him Who is invisible,' inasmuch as he possessed in perfect fulness the lively faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

In the shining trail of these mighty witnesses to the faith of Christ there comes the great multitude whom no man can number, who with all humility and all sincerity are following in the sacred footsteps of the martyr host. True is it that

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain ;
His blood-red banner streams afar.
Who follows in His train ?

The martyr first, whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave ;
Who saw his Master in the sky,
And call'd on Him to save.

Like Him, with pardon on his tongue,
In midst of mortal pain,
He pray'd for them that did the wrong ;
Who follows in his train ?

A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.

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They climb'd the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain :
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.*

Shall it not be so? The faith once for all delivered to the saints is even now quick and powerful as a two-edged sword. By its instrumentality the saints in every age live and move and have their being. They see the glory of God, and possess the marvellous revelation of the beatific vision. They are content† to await that glorious

* Compare with this well-known hymn the simple lines of William Wordsworth :

‘God for His service needeth not proud work of human skill,
They please Him best who labour most to do His will ;
So let us strive to live, and to our spirits will be given
Such wings as, when our Saviour calls, shall bear us up to
heaven.’

† Compare the vigorous lines of John Ruskin, written at sunrise on some glorious summer morning at Chamounix, when he is dreaming of some glorious millennium :

‘Awake, awake ! the stars are pale, the east is russet gray :
They fade, behold the phantoms fade that kept the gates
of Day ;
Throw wide the burning valves, and let the golden streets
be free,
The morning watch is past—the watch of evening shall
not be.

‘Put off, put off your mail, ye kings, and beat your brands
to dust :
A surer grasp your hands must know, your hearts a better
trust.

consummation to be fulfilled in God's own good time.

Meanwhile their eager, intense upward gaze seems even here on earth to catch somewhat of the wondrous glory of the heavenly kingdom, the absolute calmness of the peace that reigns in the world beyond the grave, the delicate notes of the mysterious song of the redeemed in the heavenly halls.

For all the Saints who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesu, be for ever blest.

Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress, and their Might :
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight ;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true Light.

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

Nay, bend aback the lance's point, and break the helmet
bar,—

A noise is on the morning winds, but not the noise of war.

'Among the grassy mountain-paths the glittering troops
increase :

They come, they come—how fair their feet—they come
that publish peace.

Yea, victory ! fair victory ! our enemies' and ours,
And all the clouds are clasped in light, and all the earth
with flowers.'

90 The True Ground of Faith

The golden evening brightens in the west ;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest ;
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.

But, lo ! there breaks a yet more glorious day ;
The Saints triumphant rise in bright array :
The King of glory passes on His way.

Alleluia !

THE END

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