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TO THE  
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PUBLISHED AT HIS SUGGESTION,  
ARE INSCRIBED  
WITH SINCERE AFFECTION AND RESPECT.





## P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons were preached for the most part in the Chapel of Harrow School. They offer a simple statement of some of the elementary truths of Christianity. So far as that statement is correct, I believe it to contain the best, indeed the only remedy, for the errors of the day.

All religious error, I think, may be traced up to a misconception of the real relation which subsists between God and man, since the fall of Adam. Imperfect ideas of the sinfulness of man, and low views of the essential attributes of God, have led to the formation of theories which virtually make the cross of Christ of no effect.

The present time seems to be peculiarly fruitful in theories of this kind—some leaning to the side of Superstition, others to the side of Infide-

lity ; all more or less derogating from the Priesthood and the Sacrifice of Christ ; because all start from false and incomplete views of the difficulties of the case. Not feeling the corruption of human nature, and not knowing the righteousness of God, men think too little of the distance that separates them, and the hindrances that keep them apart, and therefore they do not look high enough for the means of bringing about a reconciliation. “ The relation between God and man,” I repeat in the words of a modern writer,\* “ the one towards the other, is the department of divine and human knowledge, in which this generation has most need to be instructed.”

It is by recalling men to the Scriptural statement of this relation, that the teachers of truth have, in all ages, gained a victory over the professors of error. Luther proved the paramount importance of the doctrine of Justification by faith, by bringing out into a strong light those other doctrines which are implied in it, namely, Original Sin, and the Holiness of God. He forced men to come back with him and fairly look at these elementary truths, and either accept or reject them, before he would be led into discussions on more subtle questions of Theology.

With the same weapons the great Evangelical

\* M'Cosh on the Method of Divine Government.

Preachers of the last century fought against the errors of the day, and with the same weapons error must be combated now, whether it takes the shape of superstition or of scepticism. We have indeed to deal with far other forms of both than our forefathers. The Infidelity of the present day in England wears a very different appearance from the gross and naked infidelity of Paine and the French Revolution. It is for the most part moral, and candid, friendly and unassuming—and it appeals, not to the worst passions, but to the best and most generous affections of our nature. It works hand in hand with Christianity, in all that concerns the physical and social and intellectual improvement of the community. It professes the utmost reverence for the better features of our nature, and offers an impartial homage to virtue and genius without any distinction of creed or sect.

In the same manner, Superstition in this country has very much improved its outward appearance since the days of the Reformation. It is quiet, and serious, and humble; and has not yet had liberty and room to display itself in those extravagant irregularities, to which it seems naturally to lead, when its course is unrestrained.

Evidently, therefore, both the Infidelity and the Superstition of our day are of a highly dan-

gerous character; especially calculated to appeal with effect to the Popery and the Scepticism which have their roots in every heart, which seem to be rival elements in the natural mind of every child of Adam.

But when I say that the errors of the day must be combated with the same arms as our forefathers have used in their days, I do not mean that a bare repetition of dogmatic statements received from them by tradition, is suited to our present need. It is obvious, from what I have said above, that the most successful defence against the infidelity of the last generation—such, for instance, as Robert Hall's unrivalled sermon on the subject, must be wholly inapplicable to that modified form of unbelief, which we have to deal with. Nor can Luther's strong sword, with which he hacked and hewed at the rank exuberance of Papal corruptions, avail us against the far more formidable danger of Popery, calm, watchful, and unobtrusive, as we now see it abroad in the world, and ever subtle and urgent as it is in our own hearts.

No doubt the truth is one, in all times and for all purposes. But it has in its nature so much of vivacity and elasticity, as enables it to defend itself against error in whatever shape, and from whatever quarter, and with whatever weapons it

makes the assault. To this end, however, it must have a certain degree of liberty—it must not be tied and cramped in one posture. It is a succession of *men*, not a repetition of words, and conventional phrases and definitions—a tradition of the Spirit, not of the dogmas of a school, which must do the work of God, whether in restoring or carrying on His Church. An age of intellectual activity and excitement will not submit to be swayed by a voice that merely echoes the words of great men gone by. But let a man imbibe the spirit and assimilate the doctrine, and then out of the fulness of his own heart address himself to his generation, as one who lives among them, and knows their peculiar wants and longings and searchings, by his own past experience, and speaks in the language which every generation makes for itself—such an one will be heard and understood.

This was the secret of Simeon's success as a preacher; in the words of Sir James Stephen, "His argumentation might occasionally irritate the understanding, his illustrations wound the taste, and his discourses provoke the smiles of his audience; but when, as was his wont, he insisted on fundamental truths, or enforced the great duties of life, or detected the treacheries of the

heart, or traced the march of retributive justice, or caught and echoed the compassionate accents in which the Father of mercies addresses His erring children, it was a voice which penetrated and subdued the very soul. It was an eloquence which silenced criticism, it was instinct with a contagious intensity of belief." There are many amongst us, who devoutly hold and faithfully teach the doctrines of Simeon, who repeat his very words and phrases, but they fail of producing the same results, and they fail precisely because they teach from another man's book, and not out of the overflowings of their own heart. They lack the "contagious intensity of belief." They fight as their fathers fought, with the sword of the Spirit, but they do not wield it with the same skill. Its edge is as keen as ever, but they strike with the flat side.

At this present time Romanism and Infidelity are assailing us by a simultaneous and combined movement of a more formidable character than we have ever before known in this country. For, however opposed to each other in their nature and essence, these two evil spirits can very well join their forces in a common invasion of the Christian Faith. And nothing can withstand them but strong and pointed and reiterated statements of revealed truth—statements cast into

such a form and expressed in such language as may best suit the temper and the posture of mind now prevalent among the people.

He who shall most faithfully and most effectually proclaim to the people the way of life revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ; however poor and scanty his natural gifts and intellectual endowments, will be ever the great teacher of his generation—the real messenger of God—the true prophet of his age.

If the application of this test should in most cases reverse the judgment of the world—if it should place Knox above Shakspeare, and make John Scott a greater master of wisdom than Coleridge, it will be rejected with contempt by those who set an undue value on the fruits of natural genius, but it will offend no one who knows the answer to the question, What is Truth? and has learnt further from whence all truth immediately comes.

The following propositions seem to contain some of the truths most suitable to the condition of thought prevailing among us at the present time.

I. That by the fall of Adam, we have lost our communication with God—our nature being corrupt is essentially repugnant to the nature of God, being holy—and inasmuch as He has given us a law which we cannot fulfil, we are, by the very



condition of our being, under condemnation and a curse.

II. That in the eternal counsel of God, our only hope of recovery from this condition, is by the intervention of a Priest—the substitution of a Sacrifice.

III. That Jesus Christ is from everlasting the divinely appointed Priest—that all they who ever have been or shall be saved, are saved through faith in Him, His sacrifice, His mediation.

IV. That they who believe on Him, are born again of the Spirit of God; have a new life implanted within them, and are at once placed in a new relation with God—that for them only the promises of God are intended—to them only the Gospel system of morality is addressed.

I. The first proposition, inasmuch as it states the present relation of man towards God, implies a right understanding of the nature of God and man respectively. A correct view on this point can only be obtained from the Word of God. Most of the mistakes into which human reason in search of religion has ever fallen, arise from a primary error on this head. Pascal, in his characteristic way of stating great truths in few and simple words, thus describes the cause of one great branch of philosophical error. “Il semble

que la source des erreurs d'Epictète et des Stoiciens—est de n'avoir pas su que l'état de l'homme à présent diffère de celui de sa création. Remarquant quelques traces de sa première grandeur, et ignorant sa corruption, ils ont traité la nature comme saine, et sans besoin d'un réparateur."

This particular form of error has never been more prevalent than at the present day. In some systems, we find the character of God lowered to meet our notions of truth and goodness, in others the natural capacity of man raised in a corresponding degree. In general, the popular theory is forced both to detract from the divine character, and to exalt the nature of man, with a view to escape the alternative of accepting the simple statement of Scripture. It has been well remarked that "the religious history of mankind may be summed up in this, that it is a continually repeated attempt to suit the character of God to those who feel that they cannot do without him." Some such attempt, when reduced to a system, forms a principal element in the doctrine of the Socinians. They are forced back by their distinguishing tenets to deny the necessity of an Atonement, and consequently to assert that our nature, as it is, with certain due assistance from God, is capable of restoring itself to commu-

nion with Him, according to the famous avowal of Dr. Priestley, "After all, there is more virtue than vice in human nature."

But it is not under the form of a regular system that this error is likely to obtain an influence in the present day; the danger lies, especially to the young, more in those works of light literature, either in prose or verse, which profess indeed to minister only to the amusement or the cultivation of the taste of general readers, but which do in fact exercise a far stronger power over the mind than has ever been wielded by professed treatises on moral or religious subjects.

In some of the writers of the present day, especially those of the most genial character, it seems as if there were a set purpose to represent human nature as far better than as it appears in the word of God. There is a studious attempt to trace all faults and vices to some defects of training, to harsh treatment, or neglect; to soften down gross and deadly sins into amiable weaknesses, and to balance all irregularities of character and conduct, by the vague recommendation of *a good heart*. The idea which such writers entertain of God—a God so easily satisfied, must be indeed something very different from the image presented to us in Scripture. Even in the writings of Wordsworth, whose religious feeling was true and

deep, compared with that of the authors most powerful and most popular now, we cannot fail to miss a satisfactory expression of the truth in question. There seems to be an inadequate conception of the distance between God and fallen man. He looked at nature, physical and moral, through the medium of a mind, by constitution and habit, serene. The very ruggedness of human nature served to make his sketches of life more picturesque, as the bare rock and the bleak hill enhance the beauty of a rural landscape. But the evil of sin, the misery of separation from God, the burden of the curse, seem scarcely to have been felt. He too often writes as if man might still be contented to regard God as his Father, in the limited sense in which He is the Father of all creation—as if there never had been a closer relationship between them, and as if no wonderful exertion of Divine love had been made for the re-establishment of that blessed and mysterious union.

I do not now take into account the number and the influence of professedly infidel writers of the present day, which are reputed to be very great. I am rather referring to that which is a more subtle temptation, and a nearer danger to ordinary readers of popular literature, the omission of essential truths in such cases as that the

very omission is equivalent to a denial of them.

II. If the world in general finds it hard to receive the statements of Scripture regarding the natural condition of mankind, it is not likely that the remedy proposed in the same word of God should meet with a ready acceptance. Indeed, imperfect views of natural corruption imply imperfect views of the means of restoration. If we cannot appreciate the difficulty, we shall not look far enough or deep enough for the solution. And accordingly we find that just in proportion as the writers of the day entertain inadequate conceptions of the distance between God and man, their theories for the improvement and restoration of their fellow-creatures are poor, and feeble, and defective.

There has never been a time in the history of this country, in which the miseries that result to a large part of our population, from ignorance, and vice, and avarice, in short, from sin in every shape, have been so thoroughly and faithfully investigated as now. Much benevolence and much energy have been exhibited in the attempts made by various classes of philanthropists to remove the appalling disease which declares itself by so many frightful symptoms. But the greater part

of the remedies proposed seem to fail in this respect, that they attack the symptoms and leave the disease untouched. They would remove the fruits of sin, such as are now brought forth, and would take no measures against sin itself, but leave it to produce other, it may be still more pernicious results. The political economists tell us that they practise a science which if we will only have patience and give it a fair trial, will infallibly produce a cure of the social evils which are so fully ascertained and acknowledged. They believe that the same strength of human intellect which has in these last days gained such wonderful victories over the natural world, will be found sufficient when directed towards another object to grapple with moral evil, and subdue it.

They encourage us therefore to expect that in due course of time, the science of political economy will be enabled to apply such laws for the regulation of supply and demand, of labour and wages, of consumption and production, that covetousness will be baffled, idleness banished in disgrace from society, and a golden age of universal industry and prosperity smile upon the earth. We shall only need the full working of secular education, of sanitary improvements, and savings-banks, to render human nature all that it

needs to be, or at least that we can expect to make it.

The modern theory of Socialism is directed to the same end, and is open to the same objections ; and not the less when it assumes to itself the title of Christian Socialism. Its efforts are pointed vigorously and directly to the reform of certain crying abuses. It proclaims a crusade against selfishness and avarice, as the causes of vice and suffering ; but it suggests no remedy by which men may become less covetous or less selfish. On the contrary, however pure and benevolent may have been the intentions of those who first set the system in motion, as far as it has yet been practised, its followers seem to be actuated only by a principle of the most intense selfishness, calmly directed, and resolutely carried out.

It may be said, indeed, that the theories of political economists and the schemes of philanthropists aim only at the removal of want and misery, and at the cultivation of *physical* and *moral* good, without reference to men's *religious* state, that is, to their relation with God. This is the very error which I desire to point out ; the error of attempting to remove evil while the cause of evil remains, to improve the moral nature of man

while he is estranged from the only source of all moral good.

Reformation of the moral condition of man depends on reconciliation with God. It is doubtless possible to produce an apparent amelioration, to expel or to *drive in* some symptoms of disease, but as long as the disease remains, no real improvement is effected.

And this mistake, which renders unavailing all the ordinary plans for the improvement of mankind, is apparent also in the popular literature of the day. It is either altogether denied that our communication with God has been interrupted at all, or the means for its re-establishment are rendered so obvious and easy, that the scriptural account of the matter is virtually set aside, and the nature of God is brought so nearly on a level with the better parts of the nature of man, that the law of God is represented as identical with the law of natural affection; and human nature, when fairly allowed to take its own course, is considered capable of finding its way back to God.

It becomes the teacher of Christianity to meet these doctrines by a frank and full statement of the one true method by which it has been ordained in the eternal counsels of God that man should be reconciled to Him, and in that reconciliation



should find holiness and happiness. Let it be written legibly on the very front of all our teaching that a Priest and a Sacrifice are absolutely necessary to re-establish our communication with God—necessary, because God has so willed it. And still further, let it be clearly laid down that each individual soul must accept this way of communication and abide by it, must approach God through a Sacrifice, and through a Priest, or he cannot approach Him at all. This is a part of the doctrine which presents many practical difficulties to the natural understanding, because particular cases occur in which all the finest natural qualities are combined in a rare union, where learning and candour, a thirst for knowledge and a love of truth, render a character as perfect as the judgment of man can require ; yet it may be our stern and hard duty to pronounce of such men, that they are in a state of enmity with God, that they can never enjoy His favour, or arrive at the true wisdom, until they have made peace with Him through the Priest and the Sacrifice which He has appointed. It is this truth which makes it so painfully interesting to read the history of a Blanco White, or a Sterling, while we feel that we have no warrant for hoping that an earnest love of TRUTH in the abstract can save that man who rejects THE TRUTH as it is in

Jesus Christ—while it stands written on the page of God, that He is the God of Mercy only to those who seek Him in His appointed way. Our only hope for such men is, that in their last moments they may have turned their eyes in repentance and faith to the cross of Christ.

The name, and in some measure the idea of a Priesthood have been lately made familiar to a certain class of readers. Some of the popular writers of the day, of that class which rejects Revelation, and professes to be searching after truth on independent principles, have adopted the idea, just so far as it suits their own theories. Mr. Carlyle particularly, founds all his hopes for the improvement of society on the appearance of an ideal man, who shall come as a messenger from God, commissioned to enlighten ignorance, to dispel darkness, and extinguish wickedness with a strong hand. Him, he would have us regard as a *true* priest, a *true* prophet—the interpreter of the laws of God to man, the representative of mankind in the sight of God. The same idea is conspicuous in all the writers who have followed in Mr. Carlyle's steps, and wherever in the past history of the world they light here and there upon one who is distinguished above other men for invention, or imagination, or courage, or mere strength of will, they straightway parade him

before us as a Hero, a Messenger of God, an Interpreter of the Divine mind, a Priest. A strange company of priests indeed! the wilful and ambitious, the sensual and the covetous—Mahomet and Buonaparte, Shelley and Robert Burns! Still the idea is kept prominently before the minds of those who read, and think, and inquire about the evils of human nature and their remedies. And this evidently presents an advantage to those whose office it is to make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only appointed way of salvation for all mankind. *We* are commissioned to tell the world of a Priest ordained by God Himself—a Priest in the widest and deepest sense of the word. One who stands before God as the representative of his fellow-men, making atonement for them by the blood of a divinely-constituted Sacrifice. One who comes forth from the Father, as a perfect representative of the Godhead, on His own authority declaring the righteous laws of God, ever present by His Spirit with the hearts of His faithful followers, giving them counsel and strength, and all by virtue of the Priesthood and the Sacrifice.

III. My third proposition appears to follow so naturally from the preceding one, that it might seem superfluous to make any remarks upon it.

They who grant that a Priest and a Sacrifice are necessary for the re-establishment of man's communication with God, may well be thankful to accept the Priest and the Sacrifice which God has provided. And, indeed, the denial or evasion of this proposition proceeds from a different quarter. Up to this point the Church of Rome has agreed with the Church of England. None state more strongly than the Romanists the doctrine of Original Sin and the necessity of an atonement. The idea of a Priesthood is fully embodied in their creed, constantly paraded in their ritual. It is when we proceed a step further, and assert that Jesus Christ is the One only Priest ordained of God from all eternity, 'and that there is no other Priest after Him in the full sense of the word *Priest*, that we find the antagonism which subsists between them and us. For the Church of Rome *does* hold and teach that there is still an order of the priesthood properly, so called, in the Christian Church, that a succession of priests chosen from among men is still, according to the revealed counsel of God, necessary as the channel of communication between God and man ; as necessary now as ever it was under the temporary and typical dispensation of Moses. That all the offices pertaining to the Priesthood, namely Representation, Mediation, Sacrifice, have

been delegated to the clergy by the Head of the Church, and that the sacrifice of Christ Himself and His mediation are of no avail unless the benefits of them are derived from Him through the channel of a perpetual earthly priesthood. And thus they virtually take away from Christ the office and the honour which are exclusively His, and offer a counterfeit and usurping Priesthood to those souls who are asking their way to God.

And there is a natural desire in all of us for some *visible* means of communicating with God, to which this particular form of error appeals with great power, and sometimes, as we have seen in late years, with unfortunate success. Yet there have not been wanting teachers and writers of the highest order, who have taken especial pains to caution us against this delusion. Dr. Arnold and M. Bunsen are conspicuous for their opposition to the Romish doctrine of a Priesthood, and more recently Mr. Ruskin has raised his voice with characteristic energy on the same side.\* They regard it as a fundamental error, and one that has been most active in corruption both in doctrine and practice, and they rightly deny that in the true constitution of a Christian Church there is any *priesthood* properly so called, any caste of men appointed to stand between God and His

\* Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds.

people, in any manner analogous to the office of Aaron and his successors. M. Bunsen treats fully of the subject in his "Church of the Future," and in opposition to what he considers a *false* notion of the priesthood, maintains the *universal priesthood* of all Christians. This is a truth, and a valuable one, but inasmuch as the false notion of a priesthood assails at the same time the far more precious truth of the One Priesthood of Christ, it is obviously desirable to put forward *this* doctrine rather, as the means of meeting the prevailing misconception. Let it indeed be clearly stated, that the faithful people of God are a nation of Priests, that the way to the Holy place within the veil is open to all alike—pastor and flock, teacher and hearer, who come with the blood of the true Sacrifice; but yet let it never be forgotten, that Christ is the Priest of the whole world, and that after Him ariseth no other priest, in the full sense of the word.

IV. And when all this is done, when the way of reconciliation through Jesus Christ alone has been announced, there yet remains for the preacher the task equally hard, of declaring the doctrine of the Holy Spirit of God; that He is the Author of all life, that except a man be born of the Spirit here, he cannot enjoy the heavenly

life hereafter, that He, too, is the Author of all wisdom and of all knowledge, so that in the judgment of Christians, because in the judgment of God Himself, no knowledge and no wisdom is worthy of the name, beside that which the Spirit of God imparts to the faithful believer in Christ. That the same Spirit also is the Author of all holiness, that no character and no conduct can satisfy the requirements of God, or undergo the sifting of His judgment, except that which is founded upon the principles and the motives of His own Spirit.

The presence and the influence of this Divine Person, as they form the condition and basis of our union with Christ, so they are the very foundation of all virtue and holiness, and this is a principle of wide and general application, because it becomes our duty to pronounce all those qualities which are called virtues in the common vocabulary of the world, to be no virtues at all, unless they spring from the knowledge and love of Christ, and the presence of His Spirit.

We are all of us born with an inherent preference for natural qualities over the fruits of the Spirit. We cannot help admiring and loving those characters in which human nature is allowed to display itself to the best advantage, in which generosity, and courage, and simplicity, are con-

spicuous enough to hide other signs, not the less certain because concealed, of essential corruption.

It is the most invidious part of the preacher's office, and that which is most certain to give offence, to maintain and apply the great practical truth, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. It is not enough, as some writers of the day seem to imply, that Christ has taken upon Him man's nature,—this does not make all men His brethren, or partakers of the benefits which He came upon earth to bestow. They must be born of His Spirit, or they are not children of God in any higher sense than that of all created beings. They are not brethren of Christ, they are not heirs of His kingdom.

Neither can they even in this life receive the moral teaching of Christ and His Apostles, unless they are first by the influence of the Holy Spirit transformed from their natural state into a new being, and made one with Christ. A certain moral mechanism belongs indeed to all men by nature, and is capable, without any further aid, of a kind of imperfect and irregular action—the reason, the will, and the appetite, struggling together with various and uncertain results, and the power which seems destined to bear rule too often confessing its weakness, while it is conscious of



a superior right. "Had it strength, as it has right, had it power as it has manifest authority, conscience would absolutely govern the world." And this is the difficulty which has baffled the efforts of all those who have ever tried to make out a perfect system of morality without the help of revelation. They have drawn out precepts and rules of holy living for those who have no life or motion in them. They have found the instrument out of tune ever since

"Disproportioned sin

Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din  
Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
To their great Lord,"

and they have vainly endeavoured to draw sweet music from it.

It is the Spirit of God which must restore the lost harmony, which must pour a new life into the whole frame, so that all the parts may at once return to a due exercise of their proper functions. When this is done, conscience finds that it has might as well as right, power as well as authority. The will acts in healthy subordination to its superior, the appetites turn almost mechanically to their proper object, the affections lay hold on the Supreme Good, contented with nothing less. And thus in the regenerate man, the moral ma-

chinery, so to speak, is not changed any more than the intellectual or physical structure. Peculiarities of temperament remain to the end ; but a *life* is implanted which did not exist before. And this life is supposed—this healthy condition of the whole moral being, in that system of ethics which is presented to us in the Gospel. In Sermon IX. I have ventured to say that there is no system of morality in the New Testament, except for those that are in Christ. Others are exhorted to repent, to believe, to come to Christ, to be healed of their sickness, to receive the free pardon of God ; but the Gospel-rules for holy living are addressed only to those who possess the *principle* of spiritual life, for they only are able to receive, to understand, or to carry out directions which suppose a condition of perfect life and health. And this, I think, is sufficiently apparent from a careful view of the manner and order in which the Apostles in the holy Scriptures lay down the connexion between faith and works, between the Christian state and Christian conduct.

Such are the truths which have always constituted the foundation of Evangelical preaching ; they can never be popular in the world ; it is far easier and more agreeable to human nature to adopt some lower view of the character of God,

after the manner of the sceptical writers of the day, or to rest satisfied with those poor shifts and substitutes which the theologians of Rome have invented as a way of approach to God. Nevertheless, these truths, urged upon men's minds by the secret influence of the Spirit of God, have proved an anchor to the souls of thousands, who have been here and there silently gathered out of the world into the fold of Christ, called from darkness into light ; and not only so, but the bold and free declaration of them has at different times, in the good pleasure of God, carried irresistible conviction to the hearts of nations, and awakened whole churches from the slumber of error into the full consciousness of truth. With this fulcrum Luther moved the world.

A cross tide of Infidelity and Romanism is setting in upon our Church—the currents may join and sweep us away altogether ; our hope lies in the faithful declaration of the whole truth of the Gospel. We must be willing to bear the charge of bigotry and intolerance, we cannot be too closely attached to the truth, or too intolerant of error. And if we should be found to draw a wider line of demarcation between the Church and the world, than the children of the world desire, we may rest satisfied with knowing that we are following the example of Christ

and His Apostles. There is no evading such words as these,—“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

In the last sermon of the volume, I have treated of a distinct subject. The connexion between doctrine and ritual observances is close and active. Undoubtedly the taste for a splendid ceremonial has been widely cultivated among the educated members of our Church, and has exerted a great influence in reconciling too many of them to the false creed of the Church of Rome. And this is not greatly to be wondered at; we have all a natural repugnance to real spiritual communion with God, and we are only too willing to substitute for this, the general and vague emotions of a cultivated imagination. The exercise of devotional feeling, assisted by all the stimulants which a refined taste can apply to our senses, awakens with its delightful influence the very best tendencies of the natural heart, and enables us with a quiet conscience to evade that worship which is in spirit and in truth. On this counterfeit communion with God, many fervent minds unhappily

rest contented. To this religion of the taste and the imagination, many a pious preacher has suffered himself to appeal with eloquence only too plausible and persuasive. Take for example the following passage from the writings of a late eminent divine.

“As year by year the pealing anthem has fallen on the charmed ear, and nave, and choir, and aisle, have unfolded their awful perspective to the astonished eye; if a human as well as a heavenly register could have been kept, to tell what transports of love, of devotion, of heartfelt penitence, of rapture, and of tears, the holy walls have witnessed, and sent up in memorial on high; the lowest of all the low, the Utilitarian himself, if he believed that there is another world beyond the grave, would be constrained to allow, that the riches lavished on the abbey and the cathedral were spent wisely and well.” \*

These are the words of a good and thoughtful man; others following in his steps have spoken more strongly. Without staying to compare the above glowing description with the actual effects ordinarily produced by a magnificent service, it were well that we should fairly inquire, with the Bible in our hands, how far the Founder of Christianity, or His immediate followers, either encouraged or permitted

\* The Duty of maintaining the Truth : a Sermon, by Hugh James Rose, B.D.

the excitement of devotion through the medium of the senses and the imagination ; how far it is safe or lawful for us to make use of expedients not sanctioned by Divine authority, and so capable of exaggeration or misdirection.

It might be useful also, to come to some definite understanding as to the whole question of the employment of art in connexion with Christian worship ; on what principles, and within what limits, architecture, and sculpture, and music, may reasonably and safely be applied to the decoration of churches, and the direction of public services.

Our great writer on art, Mr. Ruskin, in the first section of his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, has used arguments which seem to lead to a conclusion contrary to my own on this subject. In his later publications, however, any doubt that might have existed as to his sentiments has been entirely removed. The following passage, which came under my notice while these sermons were in the press, is from the Appendix to the *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. page 373. I am glad to conclude this subject in words so impressive, and so much in harmony with my own long established convictions. “ I do not know, as I have repeatedly stated, how far the splendour of architecture, or other art, is compatible with the honesty and usefulness of religious service. The longer I

live, the more I incline to severe judgment in this matter, and the less I can trust the sentiments excited by painted glass and coloured tiles. But if there be indeed virtue in these things, our plain duty is to direct our strength against the superstition which dishonours them: there are thousands who might possibly be benefited by them, to whom they are now merely an offence, owing to their association with idolatrous ceremonies. I have but this exhortation for all who love them—not to regulate their creeds by their taste in colours, but to hold calmly to the right, at whatever present cost to their imaginative enjoyment; sure that they will one day find in heavenly truth, a brighter charm than in earthly imagery, and striving to gather stones for the eternal building, whose walls shall be salvation, and whose gates shall be praise.”

I have only to add, that the leading idea of Sermon XIV. was suggested by one of M. Vinet's *Nouveaux Discours*, entitled “*L'Extraordinaire*,” and that the substance of Sermon XV. appeared shortly after it was preached, in the form of a short Essay in the *Christian Observer* for January, 1850.

*Great Malvern, April 9th, 1851.*

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# SERMONS.

## SERMON I.

### ORIGINAL SIN.

GEN. iv. 8.—“It came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

THE fall of our first parents, and the inheritance of sin, thenceforth entailed upon us, is a subject that may be said to lie at the root of Christianity. From this arose the plan of God for our restoration: without a due sense and feeling of it, we cannot receive or appreciate the grace of God in his Son Jesus Christ. I desire to make a few remarks this morning, which may tend, under the blessing of God, to set be-

## SERMON I.

fore your minds, and fix in your hearts, the doctrine of original sin, that infection of nature which is the unhappy property of us all. Sure I am that if we all felt the disease within us, and the burden on our backs, as they ought to be felt, there would be little need for God's ministers to plead with his wayward people, to beseech them for Christ's sake to go for health and rest where they are to be found.

I have chosen the character of Cain, as answering this purpose to a certain extent; though not fully, because I fear it would be hard to convince some of you of the sin which is within you, by setting such a character before you for contemplation and comparison. But the infection is first exhibited to us in his conduct, and it will therefore be useful to observe its appearance and symptoms.

If we may venture a conjecture, where the word of God is silent, it is surely lawful within due bounds to figure to ourselves what must have been the life and the tone of that one family, whose history had been, and was, and was to be so awful and so wonderful. Alone on the face of the wide earth, Eden in their recollection, sin their only care, and the promised seed their only hope, Adam and Eve must have lived always very near to God, lingering about the gate of the

garden. Their whole life, one must believe, was made up of repentance, and faith, and hope. What wonder, some would say, if Abel their son, living in such a home, taught by such parents, the child of prayer, and faith, and love, grew up full of all holy and sweet affections, loving and beloved, fit almost without trial or training to go and take his place among the angels.

If example and habit could make that blessed which is under the anger of God, this would be a sufficient account of Abel's holiness and faith. But then what are we to say of this character of Cain, growing up under the same nurture, out of the same stock as his brother? How must we account for his disobedience, his envy, his falsehood, his malice, springing up in the house of such parents, side by side with all the excellencies of Abel. We cannot account for it on any theory that ever occurred to the mind of man; the only account of it is such as this: *Abel have I loved, but Cain have I hated.* The nature of Abel was changed, re-formed by the Spirit of God—the nature of Cain was left to itself.

There is no more terrible example of what human nature is *really* and *in itself* than this of Cain. It is very common to speak of the *degeneracy* of mankind, or to account for the gross



sins of men and societies by the force of habit, an evil education, the effects of wealth, or luxury, or climate ; anything, in short, but the true cause, the sin that is *born* in a man. But if such causes are of force in other cases, and doubtless they are in some, they cannot apply to Cain ; no ages of unbelief had separated between him and God ; no defects of teaching, no bad examples had led him astray ; there had been no time for the race to degenerate. Even God had condescended to plead with him face to face, and reason with him : yet he was an unbeliever,—yet when his daily companion was the very type of that which is true and lovely, he hated him ; he was treacherous, for if we understand the history as it is commonly interpreted, he enticed his brother with fair words to his death—he was a liar, and he was a murderer.

It was not that the sin of Adam had sown the *seed* merely of sin in the world ; it opened a door by which the whole horrid band of sins and evil spirits entered full grown, and took possession at once. Cain was shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin—a curse was upon him from his birth—there was a taint in his very nature, and without the good Spirit of God taking possession of his soul, and renewing it after the divine image, subduing, and at length expelling

sin, sin could not but show itself in all its deformity.

But it is comparatively an easy lesson to learn that human nature is corrupt in Cain, and in those that are like him. Scarcely a person hears me who is not ready to say, I thank God I am not as Cain was. The difficulty is to make you believe (who *can* make you believe it, except God himself?) that you *are* in your nature as Cain was; that every child that has ever been born into the world has been conceived in sin; that Abel himself inherited from his parents a nature every whit as corrupt as his brother's, and bearing in it the same taint of sin, the same seed of death. I do not say that this corruption comes out in acts or in words alike in all; indeed there are some characters so apparently free from blemish, so abhorrent from that which is unclean or sinful, that it is only by faith in the Scriptures that we venture to pronounce them sinful; but the corruption is in all—there are the tendencies, the capabilities, the appetite for sin—as sure as death is in our bodies, so surely sin is in our souls.

No man ever was enabled to apply this truth to his own case more strictly or more vividly than St. Paul. Exalted as he was by God's superabundant grace to the highest walk of holiness, he yet groaned under the sense of the body of death

that hung about him. And the case of St. Paul is precisely calculated to meet the point which I have in hand; he was not a gross transgressor of the law of God; he had lived in all good conscience before God and man; he knew nothing against himself; his whole life was a sacrifice of love to his God and Saviour; yet the beginning and the end of his preaching was, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And I desire you particularly to take notice of the manner in which he uses the word *flesh*, because we are apt to understand the word as if it applied only to the dark side of human nature,—as if, when the apostle warned his disciples not to have confidence in the flesh, he thought it necessary to caution men against trusting to their *sins* for the hope of salvation. There is no need to warn the most ignorant or the most hardened, they cannot please God by their sins, or in their sins. The error was and is still, that we put confidence in the fairer side, in the better features of the flesh; we feel, though we dare not put it into words, are scarcely even conscious of the feeling, that this or that character, so simple, so affectionate, so upright, so truthful, cannot need a total change of nature: a little help from God, a little discipline,

the encouragement of this virtue, the softening away of that failing, will surely be enough to produce as perfect a whole as even the most holy God has required.

If the Bible is true, if St. Paul wrote the words of God, and not an invention of his own, this whole view of human nature, and it is a very common one, is a dangerous delusion of the Father of lies. Hear what St. Paul says, "We are they which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I *might* also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof ~~he~~ might trust in the flesh, I more." And then follows a statement of all the advantages, all the excellencies, by which it had been proved in his case, how far human nature could go towards bringing a man to God. "And he counted them all but loss for Christ." And it was this fact, that St. Paul had made trial in his own person of all that flesh could do, which rendered him so fitting an instrument in the hand of the Spirit for establishing the grand truth that flesh can do nothing.

None indeed are so conscious of the infection that is in their nature as they who have attained to the highest standard of holiness. Let a man be much in communion with God, and

in the study of his law, and he will be more and more sensible of the awful contrast between that and his own will. Let a man fairly try to be like the Lord Jesus, and he will be painfully conscious of his weakness and corruption. There was a man\* famous in his Church and in his day for the holiness of his life and the wisdom of his counsels, to whom multitudes used to crowd, to confess their sins, and open their sorrows, and ask his advice ; and he is reported to have said, that though the most hideous and enormous sins had been often laid before him, he could always hear them charitably and make allowances for them ; for he was conscious that he had the seeds of them all in himself, and but for the grace of God, might have been guilty of the very sins themselves.

This doctrine, then, by which the Scripture has included all under sin, I would earnestly exhort you to receive, and to apply it, each to his own individual case and character. I would have you understand and *feel* that you are by nature very far gone from original righteousness, alienated from the life of God ; that, not only if you are openly and avowedly living in sin, but if you are a model of all the fairest qualities, all the richest endowments that are to be found in man, still a new

\* Francis of Assisi.

nature must be bestowed upon you, or you can never hope to stand in the presence of God. You may be as holy, as amiable, as blameless as that young ruler in the gospel whom Jesus loved, and yet if you have not taken up the cross and followed Christ, if you have not been washed in his blood, and made a new creature by his Spirit, you are as yet under condemnation. No partial change, no improvement from within of feelings or of habits will help you; it is but patching up a building without foundation; healing the wound slightly. The remedy must come from without; the leaven must be taken by the hand of God and put into the meal.

When I say the heart must be changed, I mean the will and the affections, feelings and dispositions, tastes and tempers, must be entirely renewed; so that, whereas, before this change the nature is corrupt and inclined to sin, after it the nature may be holy, as coming from the Spirit of God, and inclined to that which is good.

I suppose few here would question that their own tendency and leaning by nature is rather away from God than towards Him; you do not willingly and readily draw near to God in prayer, but rather by constraint; it requires an effort to give up the pleasures and amusements of your age and position, and to give your mind and

heart even for a few minutes to God. This is an evidence of the sin and ungodliness yet reigning or struggling to reign in your hearts. You know that if your souls are to be safe and happy in heaven, your only enjoyment there will be to serve and praise God, always to live in his presence, and under his eye. Your nature, I say, must *become* such as to find its proper satisfaction in that state of things, and here in this world it must be made such, if it is to be made so at all. There is no conversion, no regeneration in the next world; if you do not enjoy the spiritual life here, you will have no capacity for the heavenly life hereafter.

And thus you may be conscious in yourselves, if the Spirit of God has wrought or is working this most blessed change in your nature; if you are being made like Abel, the head and the type of spiritual men, and not being left as Cain, the Father of the carnal or natural race. You surely can tell whether your thoughts and desires *naturally* go upward towards heaven, or *naturally* sink downward and cling to earth. You must know, therefore, whether your nature is become spiritual, or whether it is still carnal. One \* of the most truly humble of the saints that our Church has produced in the last century, said of

\* Henry Martyn.

himself, and they are the words of truth and soberness — “Let me praise God for having turned me from a life of woe to the enjoyment of peace and hope. The work is real. I can no more doubt it than I can doubt my existence; the whole current of my desires is altered. I am walking quite another way, though I am incessantly stumbling in that way.”

Now let me tell you the effect that this doctrine faithfully received and digested may be expected to produce in you. The first great result to be hoped from it is, that it may bring you to Christ. None ever went to him in true faith, but those who were made acquainted with their utter helplessness, who despaired of being saved as they were. Hence the slowness of the Pharisees to believe in Jesus, while the publicans and sinners crowded and pressed upon him to hear his words. Hence it is that his invitations and his promises are addressed to the weary, the sick, the heavy-laden; hence, too, the severity of the divine irony, “they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If you will persist in the endeavour to stand before God in the righteousness of the flesh, to set off to the best advantage the miserable, corrupt and tainted nature which you inherit from Adam, then the



salvation of Jesus Christ is not for you. But only feel and acknowledge that of your ownself you can do nothing; that you are a fit subject for mercy and for aid from heaven, because you are essentially evil and incapable of good, and then Jesus is a Saviour to you; you can receive and appreciate his salvation, you can understand what the prophets and evangelists *mean* when they speak of the balm in Gilead—the fountain open for sin and uncleanness—the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin.

And a further effect of this conviction of sin in your nature, will be to lead you to put your trust in that Holy Spirit of God whose office and ministry it is to renew and reform the hearts of men, who alone can do it, and who is ready to do it for all who ask for his gifts in faith. You will no longer look for any mere improvement in your natural character: such indeed may easily be produced by your own management, and the pains you may choose to take with yourself; but you will be contented with nothing short of a new nature from the Lord; you will not stop striving and praying till you are partaker even of the Divine nature itself. And to this end you will lay your case in the hands of God; you will take the one sacrifice and bring it before Him in faith, as Abel did, and you will be accepted of Him.

Let Cain bring the fruits, the richest and ripest fruits of the natural soil : see you that you take the sacrifice appointed by God, and He will hear your prayer, and the Spirit of God will make you a new heart, and give you a new nature. Then your feelings and your tastes, your desires and your dispositions shall be changed too. What has hitherto been a restraint and a burden shall become your chief pleasure and delight, soon to be your only pleasure and delight. It shall become *natural* to you then, as you know it is not now, to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good ; to love to place yourself in God's presence, to live in his sight, instead of shrinking from Him, or coming to Him only as a duty and a task.

I hope another effect of this truth upon you will be, to raise your ideas of holiness,—of that holiness which you must possess, if you are ever to see the Lord, and which even you may attain to in this life. It may appear strange at first sight that strong views of natural depravity should raise your standard of the holiness that is attainable by man ; but it is a very simple truth, clearly felt and constantly put forward by St. Paul. You will readily see the reason of it. As long as your ambition and your efforts are confined to the improvement of your own nature, the patching-up

of this wreck, your views of holiness are poor and low, and limited by all that you know of frailty and weakness around you and in your own hearts. In your short life, with your many temptations and many engagements, how poor is the measure of holiness you can hope to carry out!

But with the hope and the confidence of a total change—of casting off, not merely sin, but a sinful nature, the tendency to sin and the love of it—and of receiving a portion of God's nature instead—do you not see how a field of hope and of ambition is opened to your soul, simply infinite. Nothing short of Christ for your example,—of heaven for your object: your aim being, not merely to do the best you can in the state to which the fall has reduced you, but to enter Eden again, to reconquer Paradise, to recover in your own person what Adam lost. You are no longer carnal, but a spiritual being—a fellow of those who are even now with Christ in heaven! And though you feel your new nature impeded and overgrown with the flesh here below, you can see through the mist out into that better land, where it shall spontaneously and without effort, enjoy the fulness of life, and exercise all its functions unrestrained.

I need not say much of the practical effects of this doctrine, believed and felt, on your daily life

and conduct. If you feel the disease within you, you will not readily run into circumstances that may call it out into operation. If you know in your own heart the enormous evil of sin, and how hateful it is in God's eyes, you will never make a mock at it when you meet it abroad in the world. You know this is a peculiar temptation to you. Many things, which we could look upon only in grave displeasure if we truly loved God, we are tempted to make light of, even to laugh at. Your companions will teach you to do so, and the books that are now most popular in this country help to draw you into this sin—insidiously leading you to regard as a fit subject for a jest, such sins as swearing, profaneness, and drunkenness,—sins for which Christ died!

I trust that God will enable many of you to be more wise to your own salvation, to find out and know the plague of your own hearts, and to seek the only remedy for it, to feel the burden and to carry it to the cross of Christ. And while you pray for the Spirit of God to renew your wills and affections, help Him in the work by your own watchfulness, your own self-denial, your own habits of devotion. So may you receive pardon and cleansing from the blood of Jesus Christ, holiness and strength from his blessed Spirit. So may you be among the happy number who

shall find their way back to Eden, and experience the fulfilment of the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

## SERMON II.

## THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

LEV. xi. 45.—“Ye shall therefore be holy, for *I am holy.*”

I ENDEAVOURED, on a former occasion, as some of you will remember, to set before you what the Scripture teaches us of the total corruption of man's nature after the fall, its alienation from God, its utter incapacity for good. The corresponding doctrine of the perfect *holiness of God* shall be my subject this morning.

My only aim in thus dwelling on the large and fundamental truths of Scripture is to help you, so far as a few scattered observations may help you, to read the Holy Scriptures for yourselves intelligently, and always with reference to that great system which runs through them all—the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ.

And I take these first principles of truth from the Old Testament, both because I desire to lead you in the order of God's teaching, and because I suppose that part of Scripture is most in danger of being undervalued in this present generation. There is a class of Scripture students, men who bring their heads to the task, but not their hearts ; who will, with unblessed industry, search and pry after every little historical doubt or grammatical error,—will rake up every old, forgotten objection, and would, if they might, cast away this or that portion of Divine revelation, when it does not answer the test of their shallow criticism. And all this time they overlook that wonderful and most beautiful stream of truth which springs up on the first page of the Bible, and flows steadily onwards, receiving a thousand tributaries from history, and prophecy, and type, till it has absorbed all that is true into itself, and comes forth in the fulness of the Gospel to fertilize and enrich this dreary world of ours.

And our most earnest desire for all who come to this place as learners is, that, first of all, they may learn to love the Bible from a sound knowledge of its doctrines and a reverence for them : that they may learn especially not to think lightly of the Old Testament, because its moral teaching

is not so obvious ; that they may value it as the schoolmaster that brings them to Christ ; may perceive how it states the great problem, which the Gospel so beautifully solves ; may follow out fully the conditions of this complicated question, and see how every one finds its solution in Christ. If you will thus search the Scriptures, you will find in Genesis how man was estranged from God ; in Exodus how God had compassion on him, and came and revealed himself to him again ; in Leviticus and Numbers you will read of Christ in every sacrifice and every ceremony of the law ; in Deuteronomy you will see how God treats his wayward, erring people—how he brings them first out of bondage, how he leads them through the wilderness of life, and bids them look onward over Jordan, to the abiding cities of the heavenly Canaan. You will see that the law and the Gospel are one, and that not one verse of the Bible can be touched without fear of spoiling the perfect harmony of the whole.

To come, then, to our present subject, the holiness of God, as we find it revealed in the Old Testament. I said above, that this doctrine corresponds to that of man's corruption ; they are, in fact, so involved and implied in each other, that they can hardly be treated of separately. If God is not holy, then man is not



corrupt. It was only by showing to mankind the perfect holiness of his own nature, that He could make them know the foulness of their practices and their natures. Adam, by his sin, had lost, not only his own purity, but the image of his God; and his descendants, having nothing to compare themselves with except themselves, and the false gods who were merely the personifications of their sins, could not but go on straying farther and farther from the very notion of holiness.

But when the time was come, that God, in the execution of his plan for men's restoration, should reveal himself to Israel, the first thing necessary, was to make them acquainted, as far as they could be taught, with the real nature of God. And His holiness seems to have been the view of His nature *first* set before them. The idea of holiness, I say, had been lost, and consequently it must be implanted in them anew: they were literally learning the rudiments of truth, spiritually they were infants, and accordingly they were taught, as infants are, by signs. Observe the solemn and most remarkable process.

God came and took them out of the midst of Egypt, in which His providence had kept them separate. He led them by a strange way apart from all mankind into the vast wilderness; their

path was the smooth sand never before trodden by men ; their home a tent, their food sent to them day by day from heaven. He led them to the foot of Sinai, and from the summit of that strange mountain, almost singular in its position, rising, as it does, to a height of many thousand feet from a smooth plain of sand around it,—from that isolated spot He made himself known to His people. ✓

He could not by a word reveal Himself to them as a holy God, for they knew no such word ; He used a sign to them, a sign which was appointed for the purpose from the day on which He first appeared to Moses on this same spot. He revealed himself as a being who must be *separate* among men. *Separation* is the word, and separation the idea, that signifies holiness throughout the books of the law. Moses must loose the shoe from his foot, for the place whereon he stands is separate ground. And Moses must set bounds round about the mountain, lest either man or beast should break through, for the place must be kept separate. Thus the first communication of God with His people was to teach them that they were not fit to stand in His presence ; they were to keep themselves apart from Him, or they must die.

And observe, how the same idea is kept up throughout the whole history. Their God had promised to dwell among them, and so He did; but His abode must be separate: it was ordained that the tabernacle should be in the midst of the camp, and the tribes should pitch about it in their order, but far off from the tabernacle. And even in the place where His honour dwelt among men, the same feeling of distance and of separation was impressed on every worshipper, by the order and arrangement of the tabernacle; first, the outer court, where the altar of burnt-offering stood before the door of the tent; then the inner court, or the tent of the congregation before the veil, into which the priests went daily to burn the incense; and lastly, within the awful veil, the most holy place, separate even from the separate, where was the visible presence of God.

Again, God would have His servants from among the people; so He chose a certain tribe for the office, and these were thenceforth separated from the rest of the people—distinct in place, and employment, and manner of life. Of these, again, one family were to have alone the privilege of offering sacrifice to Him; and even of this family those only were to be admitted who were altogether free from blemish; and lastly, one

man from this tribe and this family, and one only of all mankind, was to be admitted once in every year into the visible presence of God. —

Now this absolute and peremptory separation of a certain place for the dwelling of God, and certain persons for His service, was a part of the system by which God purposed to implant in the minds of men the idea of holiness. And you will readily remember how this system is carried out in all their ceremonies and restrictions. The very beasts were divided into the clean and the unclean. Did a man touch with the hem of his garment the carcase of an unclean animal,—he was unclean for a set time, and must not worship until he had been restored by prescribed forms. Did he come suddenly on the lonely leper, or take part in the carrying forth of his dead,—he was unclean—he must keep himself apart from the tabernacle. I need not go through the various particulars which disqualified men from standing before God. If the Jew felt them to be very numerous and very burdensome, we know that they were very necessary ; in no other way could the infinite holiness of God, his absolute abhorrence of everything that defileth, have been made known to man. And if there are Christians who presume to think that the ceremonial law contains nothing for them now that the broad day-

light of the Gospel is shining, they need to be reminded that the law is still a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, that if they have never yet learnt the hard lessons of Moses, they are scarcely yet fit to learn in the school of Christ.

So far then, by strongly impressing on the mind of the Jew the idea of distance and separation between God and man, He had revealed to mankind only the *difficulty* of the restoration of the children of Adam to their original state of purity and union with God. In the law God was made known as a being, not merely superior to man, but of a nature averse from man—essentially opposed to him. Hence the law was a dispensation of condemnation and death; hence it is said, that by the law came the knowledge of sin. And this, no doubt, was the first object of the law; to show men their dangerous, their desperate condition, to include them all under sin. But there was a further and a more merciful purpose behind. If the solution of the difficulty was yet afar off, there was many an indication of it, many a hint and many a sign, hollow indeed, and shallow and unmeaning to the carnal mind, but speaking and full of meaning to the faithful heart, which all gave notice of the coming good news, which all spoke to them of Christ. The very command expressed in the words of my text

implied that the people *might* be holy—that a way should be found for man, even sinful man, to stand in the presence of the most holy God.

The Jew had such a way prescribed to him; had he sinned, and did he wish to draw near to this awful and most holy being, his way was ready; he must keep himself from all the forbidden pollutions, he must wash himself and his clothing, and then, with the help of God's priest, and with the shedding of blood on the altar, he might come in and worship God, and his trespass should be forgiven.

We do not generally realize the impression that must have been habitually stamped on the Jewish mind by the common routine of their sacrifices and ceremonies. They were indeed most eminently qualified to cherish the same notion of a holy God. The perpetual washing of hands, and feet, and clothing, and after that, the shedding of blood every day of every year, regularly morning and evening, besides the countless offerings of particular persons on particular occasions,—all this must have conveyed, as indeed it was designed to do, to every faithful and enlightened Jew, the most profound appreciation of the infinite holiness of their God. And I have not a doubt but that, familiar as the word and the notion are to us, we owe them to the pro-

mulgation among the Jews of this wonderful system of the ceremonial law.

—“The idea of purity,” says an admirable writer of our own day, “pervaded the whole Levitical system. The camp was purified, the people were purified, everything was purified, and re-purified; and each process of the ordinances was designed to reflect purity upon the others, until finally, that idea of purity, formed in the mind, and rendered intense by the convergence of so many rays, was, by comparison, referred to the idea of God.” \*

And this system of ceremonies has been handed down in a wonderful manner and preserved for our use and the instruction of our souls in the way of salvation. It is true, that God, who aforetime spoke to his people by the prophets, hath in these days spoken to us by his Son; we have had the express image of his person dwelling among us upon earth. We are advanced beyond the rudiments of Moses, we walk in the light. Yet the apostle says that all Scripture is profitable, and this teaching of the law contains lessons for us.

We may learn from it, first, precisely what the Jews learnt from it, that our God is a holy God. It is true that the Gospel teaches us this in plain

\* Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation.

words, without sign or symbol ; we learn it from the life of Christ on earth ; and the lesson is put before us in a striking form here and there in the New Testament, where, in evident allusion to the Levitical services, holiness is spoken of as the necessary condition of standing in God's presence. "Blessed are the *pure in heart*," said the Lord Jesus, "for they shall *see God*." "Without holiness no man can see the Lord ;" and, again, "Every one that hath this hope," namely, the hope of seeing Him as He is, "purifieth himself, even as He is pure." But I believe, that, clearly as the holiness of God is revealed to us in the mission of his Son, it will be even more clearly and more strongly impressed upon us, by a thoughtful study of the revelation and the ordinances of Sinai. Remember that his nature is not changed ; that as He was to them, so He is to us : in the midst of us, yet separate from everything merely human and carnal, fenced off from us, our worldly works, and words, and thoughts, by impassable barriers, not to be approached at all by the unclean and the sinners, even by the rest of His people, only to be approached by the way appointed by Himself. If the knowledge of His presence among them—a presence hourly called to mind by the tabernacle and the cloud, was a comfort, or a terror, or a



burden to the Jews, according to their various characters and spiritual condition; so should the certainty that we all possess of this holy God being amongst us, a witness of our most secret thoughts, as well as of our works and conversation, be to us all a most powerful and ever-present ground of reverence and godly fear.

A second lesson that the Jews were taught at Sinai, was the lesson of the text—that they who would enter into covenant with this holy God, must themselves also be holy; and this lesson also is for us. It has pleased the Lord of His infinite mercy to call us to a higher place in His sight, to bring us far nearer to Him than the Jews or their Levites. In Christ He has called us to be kings and priests; He regards us a chosen generation, a royal priesthood; it is ours to go even within the veil, whither our own great High Priest is gone before us. But observe the conditions on which we are admitted to this high office and honour: “Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing:” and then, “I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people.” If we would minister before God, as did the high priest, we must learn from the high priest how to keep ourselves clean. See him as he goes about among the people, passing hither and thither, up and down

the camp, a man with many sympathies to bind him to his fellows and their doings, yet feeling all the while that he is the servant of the holy and separate God; he has to minister before Him in the evening,—he must beware, he must keep himself clean. Pollution is about him on all sides; here sits the leper, there passes a dead man carried out, here an unclean animal lies in his path; see how cautiously he steps; see how he gathers his garments about him. He knows full well all it will cost him to wash out the least stain of pollution: he loves the courts of God's house too truly to suffer an unwary step to cut him off from them for many days, while another performs his part. Indeed we know that it was the common custom of the high priest, before the day on which he was to enter into the holy place, to live apart in a separate house for seven days, lest he should be polluted in any way by the contact of men, and so be disqualified for the service of God.

My brethren, do you learn no lesson here? Is our God a God who careth for a spot on a garment, for a hand or foot soiled by the touch of earth, or by labour? is He a God who will not have a blemished sheep slain on His altar, and will He overlook or disregard the stains of sin on our souls? May we come into His presence

with hearts defiled all over with our own natural corruption, and still more by unlimited and unrestrained mixture in all that is foolish and vain in the world around us? Be sure that He who thought it good to lay down these strict and minute conditions for His priests under the law, will visit with a terrible retribution, the folly or presumption of those who dare to come into His presence unclean, unpurified, with the soil of worldliness, the filth of covetousness or impurity upon their hearts. Such of you as feel duly the awful and infinitely blessed nature of your calling as God's priests will not do so; you must indeed mix in the world around you; you must have your connexions and sympathies among your fellows: but a healthy constitution will walk among diseases uninfected: it is possible to carry about with you an atmosphere that shall repel the infection of sin; it is possible to carry the Spirit of Christ about with you. Be wary, however—remember your calling—remember that your God is a holy God—remember that night and day you are standing in his presence, and that nothing that defileth must enter there.

But the priest thought it not enough to be cautious in his going in and out, and to keep himself pure. He knew that after all his care, there was yet but one way of approaching the

holy God. When the day of atonement was come, he put on the garments of white linen, and washed his hands and feet in water, and then, having slain the sacrifice, he entered into the holy place with *blood*. And here is the third great lesson for us : if we have any adequate sense of God's holiness, we shall not presume to draw near to Him, trusting in our own purity, or in any care and circumspection we may exhibit in our walk and conversation. We must come to Him with the washing of water ; that is, with the tears of repentance. But this is not enough ; as Bishop Beveridge writes, " Our repentance needs to be repented of, our tears want washing, and the very washing of our tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of our Redeemer." See how the law brings you to Christ ; how every word of Leviticus, if it be properly understood, speaks to us of the sacrifice of the Cross, and tells us that that is the only way by which we may enter into the holy place. The Jews had but the vision, we have its interpretation ; they had the mystery, we hold the key of the mystery. Well might the Apostle press upon them, as he does, the perfect correspondence of the two systems, and show them Christ under all their forms and ceremonies. " By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal

redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

I have only opened this deeply interesting subject; it is capable of being followed out widely and minutely, and I hope God will give many of you the inclination and the power to learn, and understand, and hold fast the truths thus revealed to you in his holy word: that your moral nature is utterly depraved; that God reveals himself to you as a perfectly holy God, *separate* from every thing that is unclean or sinful, and that the one revealed way by which we may come into his presence, is by the blood of Jesus Christ.

## SERMON III.

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

JOSHUA xxiv. 19.—“And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the Lord. For he is an holy God—for he is a jealous God—he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins.”

*we*  
I NEED not use many words to prove to you that a right understanding of the nature of God must be the foundation of our faith and practice as His servants. On this will depend the degree in which we fear Him, or trust in Him, or love Him.

He is revealed to us all, it is true, in the same form. His character and His attributes are described for us all in the very same words; but no doubt, the idea conceived of God in the heart will vary almost infinitely, in proportion as there is an almost infinite variety in the composition

and the structure of individual minds. So that if every one of you could fairly grasp the image of God, as it appears to him, and express it in words, we should find that all would differ more or less, and that even in the most important respects. For you derive <sup>the</sup> your notion of God not so much simply from the Bible, where it is truly set forth, as from habit and education, from what you commonly hear and read about Him, as the estimates formed of His nature by the mass of the world around you. And thus you hear the one unchanged and unchangeable represented under so many and various characters; you hear such different accounts of how much service God requires, how little will content Him; what errors he will indulge, what he will altogether overlook; what things you may do, and what you may leave undone without offending Him, that you might well imagine it was of many Gods and many Lords that men were speaking,—and indeed practically this is the case. Every man who follows the bent of his own inclination, or his own habits, and shapes his notion of God, His nature and requirements, in the mould of his own natural heart, what is he doing, but “setting up his idols in his heart, and putting the stumbling-block of his own iniquity before his face?”

When Joshua solemnly appealed to all Israel

to choose that day between the false gods of their fathers, and the Lord Jehovah who had revealed Himself by Moses, he fairly warned them that it was no light thing to engage themselves to the service of such a God. And as He is the same now to us as He was to His people of old, it cannot be unreasonable to give our earnest attention to that view of the nature of God which is offered to us in the text, especially as it is the natural continuation of the subject that I have on former occasions brought under your notice. And may we not hope that both they who have already pledged themselves to His service, and they who are even now perhaps only proposing in their hearts to do so, may derive some benefit from a calm and serious consideration of His nature and character, whose we are, and whom we serve.

The holiness of God, His essential repulsion, so to speak, of all things sinful and unclean, was an idea stamped on every institution and every ordinance of the Jewish church and nation. It was not an idea peculiar to the tabernacle and the priesthood; it pervaded every act and circumstance of their ordinary life. They could not eat their meat, or till their ground, without being reminded that they were a separate people, and served a separate God.

But this was not all. If men could think of



God only as a Being that would keep Himself apart from sin and sinful things, that would leave them to their follies and to their defilements, so long as they brought them not into His presence, it is to be feared they would even be contented that it should be so; they would choose to live and die apart from God, without God in the world. But revelation tells us further of God; that He expects and demands *obedience* from men; that He chooses to enter into judgment with mankind; that He so hates sin, that He will in every case visit it with the severest penalty; that no sin is so small, so trivial, as to escape His searching eye, and the inevitable consequence of punishment. When once the Law had been given to the Jews, they had no choice in the matter, however they might desire it; they could not change their relations with God, or draw their necks from the yoke. He had chosen them to be His people, and He would be their God—a God of infinite and loving-kindness to all who honoured Him and served Him, of terrible and unsparing severity to every one who transgressed His law in the smallest particular. /

How unbounded was this hatred of sin, how strict this justice, was impressed throughout the law on the minds of the Jews, by the invariable penalty of *death*. “The soul that sinneth it shall

*die*," stands as the fundamental principle on which the whole system is built. Well indeed might Joshua warn his people that it was no light or easy matter to serve such a God; well might he remind them, "He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins."

If you have read the Old Testament with any attention, any thoughtful endeavour to learn from it, you will remember how very prominently this truth is brought out by repeated examples of God's vengeance upon sinners. Let me remind you of a few instances. Such cases as the overthrow of the world by the flood, or the sudden and fiery desolation of Sodom, are not likely so directly to affect us, I think, because we commonly imagine that the guilt of those times and those nations was out of all proportion with any sins that are common now upon the earth; a mistaken thought, no doubt, as our Saviour himself teaches us; still so it is and therefore other examples will be more convenient to our purpose.

When David was old and his days drew near that he should die, he gave a solemn charge to Solomon his son, in which, after a general admonition to keep the charge of the Lord in all things that he might prosper in all that he did, he adds the following specific injunction, "Thou

knowest what Joab the son of Zeruiah, did to the two captains of the host of Israel: unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace . . . do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." We might have thought that these were the words of a blood-thirsty and revengeful man, dying with hatred in his heart. But it was not so: the man who spoke thus was a man full of the love of God, one who owed all to His *loving correction*, whose heart overflowed with a kindliness and a tenderness almost divine, But he was a man who knew something of the nature of God; that He was a just God and a jealous. He knew that this man Joab, his own active and unscrupulous servant, had transgressed the law and incurred the penalty, and though the necessities of the times had served for an excuse, David felt that he had himself sinned in leaving him so long unpunished. It was a sad and solemn, but most sacred commission that he handed on to his beloved son, to vindicate the law of God by the death of the sinner.

But the crimes of Joab were, as all the world must admit, great and hateful. Can we not find some stronger instance of the jealousy of Divine justice?

We read in Leviticus that, on a certain day, the son of an Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp, and, in the heat of strife, the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the Lord, and cursed ; and they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be showed them ; and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, "Bring forth him that hath cursed, without the camp, and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses."

And again, while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, "they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath-day, . . . and they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death ; all the congregation shall stone him with stones. . . . And they stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses."

And once more. When David brought up the ark of God from the house of Obedom to Jerusalem, and there were no Levites at hand to wait upon the ark, it came to pass that the oxen stumbled as they went, and shook the ark, and Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark, "and the

anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, because he put his hand to the ark, and there he died before God."

Such was the God with whom the Israelites had to do, and such is the God—unchanged, as His nature cannot change—whom we have to serve, infinitely jealous of His honour; strict in His requirements, and severe in His punishments; one that will by no means clear the guilty, or overlook transgression and sin. The natural, unregenerate hearts of the Israelites shrunk from the service of such a God, and so often as their sins got the mastery over their souls, they naturally fell away from His worship, and found them gods of the nations round about, of a character congenial with their own lusts; idols, not only tolerant of sin, but to whom sin was the most acceptable service. And whenever, by suffering and chastisement, they were called back to the true God, so often did He again through His servants remind them that His nature was still the same—still He was a jealous God, one that would by no means clear the guilty, /

And the men of this generation do precisely as the Israelites did before them. Just in proportion as sin, or the love of the world, or the love of self reigns in their hearts, they depart from the true idea of God: it is too stern and severe

for them ; they say it shocks them to think of such a God, and they set them up a more indulgent Deity, whom their own imagination has framed, or whom they have borrowed from some neighbouring tribe. ' Only compare the picture of God which the Bible presents to us with the Baals, or Molochs, and Ashtaroths, whom the ambition, or avarice, or pleasure of the world have set up in His stead in all our high places, and you will see how needful it is to be ever recalling yourselves from the false notions of God so common amongst us, to the stern and true reality of the Bible.

You will hear these false images of God, these degrading estimations of the Divine nature, in the common conversation of men of the world ; you will see them in their practice, you will, above all, find them set forth skilfully and industriously in much of that light literature of the day, which has such charms for many of you. I say *industriously* set forth, because it is my deliberate belief that the object of such works is not merely to amuse, but also and even especially to lower that high standard of holiness, which the Bible assures us is required by God.

You will hear and read then of a God who is *too merciful* to desire the punishment of sin—a God who will be indulgent to failings which we

owe to the very nature He has given us, who will make allowance for circumstances of strong temptation, of sudden impulse, of youthful indiscretion, who will give us credit for good intentions, even if we do wrong by mistake in the execution of them. Ask yourselves fairly, is this the God who commanded a man to be put to death for a few hasty words uttered in the heat of strife, and another for gathering a few sticks that lay in his path on the day of rest? Is this the God who made a breach upon Uzza, and slew him on the spot when he put forth his hand to uphold the ark?

My brethren, if you are true to yourselves, you will see how these facts, not to be evaded or explained away, are intended to convince you all of sin, to show you how each of you as you sit here, is in the sight of God found guilty of *death*—observe there is no penalty for sin short of death—death of the body, according to the law of Moses, signifying to us the everlasting death of the soul. You see that God is thus represented in the Bible as exacting to the utmost the penalty of death in every case, and your own consciences at this moment tell you, that you have incurred it over and over again, as surely and far more surely than the poor wretch, who for his few hasty words was made to kneel down amidst the cruel shower

of stones, and looked around into the grave and severe faces of elders and priests, and friends and kinsmen, and saw no pity in their eyes.

And it is a fearful thought that in the case of each of us there is an accumulation of countless transgressions, which must all be paid for; the law must be fulfilled in every case, not one iota or one tittle of the penalty shall be lost or excused.

But you may object to all this, that I have been speaking of God as He revealed himself in the first covenant, under the ministration of condemnation. Surely He has made himself known to us under a different form, as a God of mercy and forgiveness, a God of hope, of love, and of peace.

And it is true that we thus do see Him represented in the person of His beloved Son; but we are not to suppose that He is less jealous of His honour than before; that He has sacrificed His justice to His mercy, or that His requirements are less exalted than formerly. Are they not rather far higher in the Gospel than in the Law? does not the Sermon on the Mount propose to us an infinitely higher scale of duty than the two tables of stone?

And still further, we who have lately dwelt upon the tale of Christ's sufferings and death, who have witnessed the agony at Gethsemane,



and the pain and thirst and cry of the Cross, shall we dare to say that God is *less* severe in the exaction of the penalty of sin to the last farthing than He was of old ? Shall we not rather humbly see and acknowledge in the awful sacrifice of the Cross the very consummation of God's justice brought out in wonderful and ineffable union with His most sovereign love and compassion ; the very mystery of godliness fulfilled ? There is indeed now no condemnation, but for whom ? for them who are "*in Christ Jesus.*"

The Jews, we know, were not left to sink in despair under the yoke of such a law, and in the fear of such a God. For God while He asserted all the claims of His justice, yet held out to them the hope of satisfying Him by the institution of sacrifices ; for every sin He would have a life ; for every sin blood should be shed ; but the blood of a beast slain in a certain manner, and after certain conditions, would be admitted in His sight as a sufficient substitute for the life of a man. "Speak unto the children of Israel," said the Lord, "if any of the people sin through ignorance, if his sin which he hath sinned come to his knowledge, then he shall bring his offering." In every case the offering must be brought, and blood must be shed, whether it were the great offering of the atonement, or a trespass

offering, or a sin offering. And thus the justice of God and His jealousy were kept before the minds of the Jews, not only by the instances of judgment which I have referred to, and others of the same kind; but by the continual stream of blood, and the continual volume of smoke, that ever before the dwelling of God flowed upon the ground and rolled upwards into the sky,—an awful monument of the evil of sin and its consequences. Well might they say among themselves, our God is a *consuming fire*.

I can only in few words ask you to apply to yourselves, for your instruction and your warning, the undoubted truths which I have thus brought before you. Such of you as are even now resolving, like Joshua and his house, to serve the Lord, remember this description of Him, and be humble. “The Lord is an holy God—he is a jealous God—He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.” And this not for your discouragement—the Lord forbid that any one who has learnt the name of Jesus Christ should be discouraged—but that you may have the case fairly stated as it stands between you and your God, that you may never again cheat yourselves with false notions of God, and consequently low notions of his service, that you may not dream of a law that shall indulge your weaknesses, consi-

der your circumstances, make allowance for your temptations. God makes no allowance, accepts no excuses, is never lenient to sin in any shape. Rather let him among you who feels that he has sinned, throw away at once and for ever all false hope, and let him take his offering and come to the Lord. The blood and the smoke of the tabernacle was always before the eyes of the people of Israel, so let the blood of Christ be perpetually before your soul; let it speak to you of the awful severity of God's justice, and the infinite tenderness of His love; let it teach you that without repentance and faith you are even now under condemnation, while yet repentance and faith in that sacrifice will save you. Let it remind you that while you have a thousand times deserved death, the accumulated chastisement of all your sins is laid upon Christ, and the justice of God is not abrogated or evaded, but satisfied; the very God who cannot overlook one sin the most trivial, is yet faithful and just to forgive you your sins for Christ's sake.

## SERMON IV.

## THE SINNER IN THE DUST.

JOB ix. 32, 33.—“For He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.”

WE have the authority of Scripture for saying that the whole mystery of salvation has been made manifest to us by the personal ministration of Jesus Christ. It was far otherwise to the saints of old : many prophets and kings, with wistful and yearning hearts desired in vain to hear the things which we all have heard so many times, and know so familiarly. The unfolding of the mystery was a gradual work—here shone one faint ray of light, and there another ; to each generation of the faithful just so much was per-

mitted as should still draw their hearts onward and keep their hopes alive.

But to some of them, and at some times, this partial knowledge was a terrible thing. To have been taught only the rudiments of the everlasting truth under the stern discipline of Moses; that is, to have learnt only that man was under condemnation, that his very seed and root was corrupt, and yet that he had to serve a God of infinite power and holiness, whose justice absolutely required a perfect obedience, and admitted of no excuse;—to have read, I say, only thus far in the half unfolded roll of God's revelation was a terrible thing for men who had conceived any worthy thoughts of themselves as immortal beings.

Such was the case with Job: and the state of feeling which is most clearly impressed on the whole of this book, was the natural result of his position at the precise point in the progress of revelation, on which he was placed by the providence of God. Nowhere is the contrast between God and man so strongly stated; nowhere the antagonism—the positive repulsion of the two natures—the heavenly and the earthly—the essentially holy and the essentially corrupt, set before us in colours so distinct and so fearful.

Job himself laid on the ground, naked as when he came into the world, stripped of all that

had made life a happiness to him, his very body covered with the loathsome signs of decay, is a fit emblem of what human nature is in its essence in the sight of God—so feeble, so corrupt, so altogether helpless and miserable. And in the depths of his affliction, while he most keenly felt his own wretchedness, it was given to him at the same time to see, in all its grandeur and fulness, the perfection of the Divine Nature. He was not of that class—a large one in the world—whom affliction from God's hand does not soften, but rather degrades—who, though often chastised, yet never turn their face to their corrector, nor lend an ear to His words, who live and die with their faces on the earth. Job was stricken to the ground indeed, but his eyes, and his hands, and his heart, were still raised upwards; his very misery only gave him a stronger-appreciation of the ineffable grandeur and majesty, the power and holiness of his God, made him feel all the more his own infinite distance from such a being, and long, almost against hope, for a way of reconciliation.

That he *had* hopes as clear and as strong as ever a believer had, we know from that beautiful expression of faith in his coming Redeemer, which has spoken peace and assurance to many troubled souls in all times of the Church; but the general

tone of his mind under his troubles, and that particular state of feeling on which it is my purpose to dwell, was rather the mere *longing* for some means of being set right with God—expressed sometimes hopefully, but more generally in terms of sorrow and almost despair. This is the feeling that is presented to us in the words of the chapter from which the text is taken: “How should *man*”—such a being as this that lies here—“how should *man* be just before God,”—that God “which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof trembleth, which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and scaleth up the stars, which alone spreadeth out the heavens and treadeth upon the waves of the sea?” / How shall I answer *Him*, and choose out my words to reason with Him; for He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both.’ The chasm was very wide, and where was the bridge to be found? the quarrel was deadly and inveterate, where should we look for a daysman, an umpire, a mediator, an arbitrator, one that should have power to lay his hand on both, and speak the terms of reconciliation with authority? Where should we look for such an one? Not among the sons of men, for they were all, even as

himself, involved in the same rebellion and the same ruin; dared he to hope that *God* would find such a mediator, when *God* was his adversary?

Oh! if Job could have heard those most blessed words of the Spirit by the mouth of St. Paul, when the problem had been solved, the mystery fully opened, the daysman found, the adversary turned into the Saviour and the justifier. "Who shall lay anything *now* to the charge of God's elect? *God* that justifieth! Who is he *now* that condemneth? *Christ* that died! yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." But this is anticipating.

I wish you to remark, then, that this same state of mind, resulting from, first, a painful feeling of distance from God, and alienation from Him, and, secondly, an ardent longing for some means of reconciliation, was the state of all thoughtful and pious men under the imperfect dispensation of the old covenant. The necessity of a mediator was apparent to their very reason, and had it not been so, it was set before them most significantly in the institution of the priesthood and the sacrifices under the law. They could only receive the law from God by the hand of a mediator—only through a mediator they might offer



their gifts at the altar of God. / And yet with the necessity thus ever kept before their eyes, they were but too well aware that the mediation of Aaron and his seed was not that which could ever bring together God and man, that he was not the daysman that might stand betwixt and lay his hand on both!

It may go further and say, that the same posture of feeling is manifested in all the efforts that reason and philosophy in the heathen world made in search for truth, without the help of revelation. They were in truth "feeling after God, if haply they might find Him,"—realizing in some measure the truth, that mankind had lost the image of God, and that what was lost might be recovered. For the most part indeed their speculations were vague and ill-directed, as one might expect; only, I believe, in one case did reason come so near to the mark of truth, as to touch the notion of a Divine *Person*, a Saviour, a Teacher, a Mediator, yet all testified to the same desire, the same consciousness of a spiritual life, and the same need of access to God. f

It was not till all man's efforts after restoration had signally failed, that God's time drew on, when He looked upon the sacrifices of the Jew and the wisdom of the Greeks, on the rigid devotions of the Pharisee, and on the specious ab-

## THE SINNER IN THE DUST.

stractions of the Philosopher. He looked, and saw there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His own arm brought salvation. /

And further, I observe, that this state of feeling was the condition of all those who were prepared to receive the Mediator with alacrity as soon as he appeared on earth. They were waiting for the consolation of Israel, longing for the salvation of the Lord, ready to depart in peace and joy when they had once seen Him. And in every particular case which we read of man or woman taking up the cross and following Jesus, a sense of sin, or sickness, or weakness, and a thirsting, a longing, a gasping for relief, for health, for peace with God; for the favour and the love of the Most High and Holy, was the previous condition, the predisposing cause. So drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners; so came that woman that was a sinner, and found her way into the very chamber of the Pharisee, and stood at His feet and washed them with her tears; so came the poor woman who had been vexed with her complaint twelve years, and had spent all her living upon physicians, and forced her way through the throng till she reached the hem of His garment, and that was enough, so the unhappy father, who brought his tormented

child to His feet, and said, "I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him." And so it was when the first preachers of Jesus Christ set forth on their blessed errand, and so it has been in the secret history of every soul from that time. There must be first a sense of sin and sickness, or there will be no hearty embracing of the Saviour, the good Physician. / Men must feel like Job, that they are at feud with God, and hopelessly overmatched, or they will not look so earnestly for a mediator; they must have somewhat of the feeling of a lost sheep, straying in the dark and howling wilderness, or they will not listen with any of Job's intense yearning for the voice of the good Shepherd as he calls after them. And, accordingly, it is the first of the offices of the Holy Spirit to convince the world of *sin*. / This, then, should surely be the first object in the order of all our teaching, to lead you to know the sin which is within you, to feel your consequent separation from God, and to long intensely for re-union with Him.

Learn then, my brethren, to realize something of the feeling that Job so expressively uttered in the words of my text, "He is not a man that I should answer Him." And do not attempt to put the subject aside: do not say that the history of Job, with all his extraordinary sufferings, contains

no lessons for such as you. It is very true that the void of the heart, which we all have, is made known to us in various ways, as it pleases God to deal with us. To some by slow and gentle degrees, by kindly and wise training from earliest youth, so that it is satisfied by the knowledge and love of Christ as soon as it is felt, to others by some sudden shock, by the hand of God cutting away sharply some earthly object of the affections, and making us feel our true condition, our danger, and our needs. But even to such as you, so different in outward circumstances, the experience of Job conveys a direct lesson. / It tells you the stern truth of what human nature is in its essence, what every one of you in your natural state is in the sight of God, what you will all be one day even to the feelings and apprehension of your fellows. Which of you is there here ~~who~~ will not one day certainly be even as Job? A few weeks languishing on a death-bed, or if that should be spared you, a few days in the grave, will reduce your body to a worse state than his, and will carry your soul into that close and awful contact and contrast with God under which his spirit sank and was dismayed. /

It were ~~your~~ true wisdom to try to realize Job's desires after God, before they are forced into your soul by some crushing visitation, too late per-

haps to be satisfied. And until you are conscious of them in some degree, it will be useless, and worse than useless, to speak to you of Christ crucified: the good news is literally no good news to you. It is a mere idle mockery and waste of words to tell you that you may cast your burden on Him, when you do not feel you have a burden at all; to point out for you the way to the good Physician, when you will not believe that you have any disease; to remind you that there is enough and to spare in your Father's house, when you are satisfied with the riotous living, or even the husks of your far country; or, lastly, to announce to you, as Andrew announced to Simon, we have found Him who shall reconcile us with God, the daysman who shall lay his hand on us both, when you do not care to be reconciled, do not even feel the separation. This is, in truth, to lose our labour.

The first object of all our teaching, as it is the first aim of the Spirit's teaching, must be to show you your wants, your danger, your disease; to make you feel the fall in your own nature, and mourn over your separation from God; to make you suffer, if need be sharply, the pangs of hunger, that you may crave after the bread of life. The current of life is flowing on brightly and cheerfully with most of you—health, and youth,

and abundance, are filling your hearts with present joys and boundless hopes for the future. Is it an unkind work to try to check the flow of pleasure, to interrupt such dreams? Not so; but it is the truest friendship that in the midst of the slavish luxuries of Egypt would bid you turn your face manfully to the desert, in the hope of that Canaan which lies beyond the flood. / It is when you are most full of the good things of this world, and have the keenest appetite for them, that you most need the serious, severe warnings of the Holy Spirit, the "woe to them that laugh now, for they shall weep and mourn;" or this, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

May you all learn to feel and to grieve for the sin that is in your hearts, and the gulph that separates you from God while yet the daysman is betwixt you; while yet the gulph is bridged over for you; and not learn to feel it first, like that unhappy rich man in the parable, when the time of reconciliation shall have passed for ever. I

do not tell you that you must create in yourselves this self-consciousness, or this craving for a higher life. } It is the work of the Spirit to do that; only 'do you see, that you quench not the Spirit—do not chill or check the voice that even now perhaps is whispering to some one among you, that these things are true, that you are in the dust like Job, and that it would be indeed a blessed thing to be at one again with God, to redeem the lost possession, to reclaim paradise. } Listen, I say, to the voice within you, and encourage these first movements of holy desires and affections—search for the truth of God in the word of truth—there the Spirit holds up to you the mirror in which you may learn your true condition with respect to God, and commune earnestly with your own hearts. } If it should please the Spirit of all truth to reveal to you such hard things of your own state and prospects by nature, and such terrifying views into the holiness and the jealousy of God, as shall banish from your hearts the mirth and the buoyancy that now reigns there, it will be a blessed exchange. To him that looks for the salvation of his soul, such sorrow is better than laughter—in the wilderness he is nearer to God than he was in Egypt.

And if ~~your~~ fears, and misgivings, and anxieties should be never so great, your relief is very near

at hand; and who shall describe the joy and the peace that fills the heart of him who has found the Redeemer that his soul longed for? Did ever words sound so sweetly as those of Job, coming forth as they do from the midst of his sorrowful groanings, the expressions of dismay and despair, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

God has indeed dealt very mercifully with us in this respect. If there is any one here whose heart responds to the feeling that I have described, who knows what it is to mourn in secret over the plague of his own heart, and gasp for the water of life, let him reflect with thankfulness that he need not, like Job, sit in despair, and look around in vain for help, and say in the bitterness of his soul, "He is not a man as I am, neither is there any daysman betwixt us, who might lay his hand upon us both." There is not room for a moment's despair or doubt. Your Redeemer has appeared—the all-sufficient Mediator is before you—He who is both God and man, and can therefore judge betwixt God and man, can lay His hand upon both, and bring both together.

What more can be said than this by the most faithful ambassador of Christ, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" knowing the misery and the danger of separation from God, "we pray you in Christ's stead be ye re-



conciled to God." If your hearts do not themselves tell you of their own plague, the enormity of their sinfulness, let the history of redemption, let the price of your souls, the blood of God's own Son, bear witness to it. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? "

## SERMON V.

### THE MERCY OF GOD.

ISAIAH lxiii. 7.—“I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord.”

THE several characteristics of God, as they are made known to the souls of men, call forth of necessity certain corresponding states of feeling. If we have rightly apprehended that which is meant by the holiness of God, and if we look upon Him only under that one aspect, I believe our sensations must be those of defilement and separation, we must stand apart out of his way, and cry, *Unclean, unclean*, or fall on our knees, and say, “Depart from us, for we are sinful men, O Lord!” Or again, if the Spirit of truth shall have taught us to know the exquisite severity of God’s justice, His all-searching eye,

and His unsparing hand, the effect, I suppose, will always be to cast us down shrinking and crouching on the ground, feeling with all the bitterness of Job, "He is not a man that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment."

And these are only the first steps in Divine knowledge, the earliest stages of that mysterious transformation through which the soul must pass before it comes out into the perfection of its life. It was never the purpose of God in His plan for the recovery of mankind, that His people should shrink away from Him, as unclean beasts, or tremble and groan before Him as the devils. His declared object was to redeem us from slavery, and from all those miserable feelings that belong to slavery; to purchase for Himself a family of sons and daughters, who might stand upright, happy and fearless, in His presence—a Church of kings and of priests, without spot or wrinkle, who might go into His presence with feelings only of love and joy. To produce these feelings in men's souls, it was necessary that they should be able to see God in another character than that of a just and jealous, or even a holy God. There was no comfort to David after his sin, to Job as he sat in his sackcloth, to Peter as he thought on his ingratitude, in *these* attributes of God.

It is only when He further makes himself known as the God of *love*, that the soul dares to lift up its eyes from the dust, and to look upon Him, and even then our eyes would be dazzled by the brightness and the terror of His other awful attributes, had it not been His gracious dispensation that we might learn to love Him in the person of His Son ; that in Him we might be trained to look upon the Godhead in its true light, subdued within the power of our shrinking, feeble eyes. And no doubt it is only in the person of His Son that God has revealed His love as well as His other characteristics. In Jesus Christ, and in the highest degree in Jesus Christ on the cross, is the *whole* mystery fully revealed—the mystery of holiness, of judgment, of sin, and of *love*. Yet, as I have before in part endeavoured to explain to you, how the whole of God's truth was shown darkly as through a glass in His revelation to the Jews, it will be interesting to find that in this particular too, they were not left without some strong gleams of the coming light.

It has never indeed been granted to *many* in any one age or people, to feel that God is to them a God of love. The mass of men are carnal, and they regard God as their enemy ; they know nothing of His tenderness, they cannot realize His gentleness. But He has always had His own

chosen people, on whom His love has come down full of light and warmth from above, and they have felt it, and caught its genial heat, and love has become the reigning principle of their hearts, and has given a bright colour to their lives. Through the black pages of the world's history we may trace one narrow streak of light—narrow, but very bright, and it is the trace of God's love. It is the history of that spiritual family who have lived in the light of this love, who have felt it, and whose whole nature has been exalted and purified by it. Noah, who walked with God; and Abraham the friend of God; Samuel, who was given to Him from his birth; and David, the man after God's own heart; all these, and such as these, whose names form the noble genealogy of the faithful, have known God as the God of mercy, of compassion, of gentleness, of long-suffering; not that they fondly and wickedly imagined Him other than He is in His whole essence, or exalted His love by forgetting His holiness. Rather they were taught to comprehend His whole nature, and to rely on His word and promises, and to look forward to the wonderful work that should at one view fulfil all His requirements, and exhibit all His perfections. They had the promise of God that *they* were safe from His terrors, that to *them* He was all love, and only love; and so, from

beneath the shadow of His wings they looked out, as Noah did from his ark, upon the destruction of nations, while *their* only feeling was perfect safety, their attitude and their language that of confidence and praise.

And thus Isaiah, in this 63rd chapter, places in the closest contrast the terrors of God and the loveliness of God. I do not know any one passage in which the mystery of redemption is so strikingly set forth, in which we are so made to feel, with George Herbert, those two things without fathom—*Sin* and *Love*. “I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come, and I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.” And then immediately after this appalling song of vengeance, with the most thrilling and touching expressions of joy, he says, “I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the *house of Israel*, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies,

and according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them ; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old."

Nor is there anything unnatural or untrue, in this close companionship of that which is terrible, and that which is lovely in the character and the work of God. Vengeance and Redemption go hand in hand. The Pillar of the Cloud, which was black and so threatening to Pharaoh was all light on the side of Israel. The song of triumph by the Red Sea followed hard upon the cries and wailings of the drowning Egyptians ; and so it is with us, if we really feel as our Church supposes us to feel ; the agony, and the struggle, and the despair of Good Friday, is immediately succeeded by the joy, and peace, and confidence of the resurrection ; because to the children of God there is no condemnation, no wrath, no terror,—all is swallowed up in the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Now I have along assumed that in the natural order of the teaching of God, if I may so speak, at all events in its revealed order, He makes Himself known first as a holy and a jealous God, and creates in us the corresponding feeling of distance and condemnation. Then,

when the soul is conscious of its separation, and longs for reconciliation, when it trembles in fear of God's judgments, and has learned to hate the corruption that has made it so vile, then God reveals Himself as the God of love. In other words, the Law comes first, to teach us our wants, our difficulties, our embarrassments; and when the Law has done its work, the Gospel brings us the solution of them, by declaring the *loving-kindnesses* of the Lord. Then this also is the natural order in which the truth of God must be presented to every soul among us. We are none of us ready to receive the love of Christ into our hearts until we have been convinced of sin, and have been taught our true position in relation to God.

And this at once opens a practical question of the greatest importance. Is it right to mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, to tell of His love and His pity to those who are not yet sensible of any separation, or really desirous of a reconciliation. Would it have been right or wise to whisper to that prodigal in the very midst of his riotous living, that his father was longing and yearning after him, and still loved him in the midst of his folly, and wickedness, and ingratitude? Is it right for me to speak of the love of Christ, when I cannot but feel that a large



part at least of you are not prepared to receive it or to value it; that many of you are so far from longing after it, that you scarcely care to hear of it; should we not rather wait till you have begun to *feel the famine*?

No doubt if you continue to cast back our words in contempt, if you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we must at last cease to make offers of mercy and love to you. Nothing will then remain but to speak to you in those words which have been read in your ears this evening, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind."

But as long as we *may* preach the Gospel to you at all, we must represent God as a God of love. For we have the express direction and example of the apostles themselves, that the great work of love is to be the beginning and the centre and the end of all preaching—the minister of God must know nothing among his people save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And as long as you are taught to look upon this as the great instance of God's love to men, you will be in no danger of mistaking the nature of that love—of regard-

ing it as a lenient indulgence to your follies and your sins. You will be forced to remember what it cost Him to love you—how inseparable in His nature is the hatred of sin, and the love of you—and you will see that the loving-kindness of the Lord was never so brightly displayed, as when he was treading the winepress of his wrath *alone*. And thus the preaching of Christ crucified, containing as it does in one great truth, the highest exhibition of love and of terror, is the great means of subduing and converting the hearts of unbelievers.

So far then should I be from waiting till you had been bent down into the dust like Job, by the severity of God's judgment, before I would mention to you His loving-kindness, that I should at all times set before you His love first of all, and trust to His Holy Spirit that the preaching of the cross might itself humble you first, and then comfort and exalt you. And therefore now, if there is any one among you who has never felt the terror of the Lord—who has so armed himself in habits of ungodliness and sensuality, or, what is fully as unpromising, in a delusive state of self-complacency, as not to have felt the sting of conscience or the word of God, to him I desire now to mention the loving-kindness of the Lord. If the anger and the threatened vengeance has

failed to alarm you, let the tenderness and compassion melt you. Come near for once, and see this wonderful mystery of the Cross—see if it be really true—that tale which your lips have so often mechanically repeated—that God sent His Son into the world to die for you, and by His death at once to vindicate the holiness of God, to satisfy His justice, and to establish His love. That when you were most estranged from God, and contented to be so, He was loving you, and longing for you, and devising so wonderful a system for your recovery and salvation. Perhaps the rebukes of the Lord have ceased to move you, or His threats to alarm you—perhaps you have hardened your face against His looks of anger—but you cannot surely resist His love—you cannot hear unmoved of His great mercy—His tenderness—His patience. How He pleads with you.—how He prays you to be reconciled to Him. Let the most careless and most indifferent amongst you, only carry away with him this thought, and ponder it well and lay it to heart, and by God's grace it shall do more to arouse him to understand his true position, to know the plague of his heart, and to find the only remedy, than anything I could say of the severity of God's law, and the terrors of his vengeance.

And if such may be the effects of the love of

God on those who have never yet felt it, what thoughts does it suggest to those who know it, and feel it, and live upon it? If it may stir the heart of an alien, what is it to the child of God? I have said that it is not given to many to know this love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and that it is only fully appreciated by those who are painfully conscious of separation, and desirous to be reconciled. Well, no doubt there are some such here—let me say a few words to you on the loving-kindnesses of the Lord. You have had some seasons of darkness in your souls—you have felt your heart fail when you have looked upon the absolute holiness of God, and the inviolable rigour of His law—and this has made you turn with shame and loathing from that abode of unclean thoughts, your own heart. And then, when you had hitherto only known God in the voice of thunder and the eye of lightning from Sinai when, you listened only for the sound of the trumpet, to call you to judgment with this stern adversary, you have heard a voice say, “Come unto me, and I will give thee rest”—“My son, give me thine heart”—“In all thy affliction, I am afflicted, in my love and in my pity I have redeemed thee.” And this is the strange end of the great controversy between you and your God. A solution that could never have

occured to the heart of man to devise, but which is altogether satisfactory to the wants and desires of your soul. You shrink from the God of justice and holiness—but you are drawn irresistibly into the arms of the God of *love*.

Let me exhort you to continue in that love, and to rest upon it in perfect confidence and security. Trace the history of the love of God in the Scripture, and learn there that it is worthy of all confidence. You will see that it has never failed—that ever since it was first fixed upon Abraham, it has stedfastly followed his seed through all generations, God always has had His own people—and has always loved and cherished them with a father's care. And so exclusive has this love for His own chosen people always been, that other nations, the greatest and the mightiest as we call them, have been mere instruments in the hand of God for their good—at one time for protection, at another for chastisement—used and then laid aside. Others have been guided by His Providence—Israel alone has been the object of His love. And your faith is a poor and a feeble faith, if it does not enable you to feel, that you are dearer now to God, than Israel after the flesh—for you are His children and heirs of His kingdom.

Then, I repeat, believe in His love, be happy

in it—it is your right and privilege, and make it your business to search into the mystery of it, and to comprehend its marvellous height and depth, its length and breadth. Remember that the character of this love is changed, since you repented and believed, and gave your heart to God, and realised in your own soul the blessings that were pronounced in your baptism. He loved you, indeed, as he loves all the world, when you were His enemies—loved you so infinitely as to give His only begotten Son to die for you:—how much more, more dearly, more surely, must He love you now, when He regards you as His own children, with the very same sort of love as that with which He loves His Son Jesus Christ !

If you can realize this love of God and appropriate it to yourselves, I need hardly tell you what a lustre and what a warmth it will shed over all His gifts as you receive them. The ordinary benefits which He pours down upon the unthankful and evil, as well as upon His own children, will come to you with a peculiar value, as the daily gifts of a loving Father. Only feel that He loves you, and what a stimulus will it give to all your resolutions of self-discipline and self-improvement—feel that He is looking upon you with care and affection, and you will find every one

of your actions, however trivial in the eyes of men, invested with dignity and importance.

And as I observed in the outset that every attribute of God, when rightly apprehended, produces some corresponding state and affection in us, so if you can believe God to be the God of love, you will undoubtedly experience in your own souls, the blessed effects of this belief—your obedience to God will be a cheerful, happy, affectionate obedience—you will love Him with a pure heart fervently, and having begun by loving the Father, you will go on to love all His children. And on this principle alone is it possible to serve God as He desires to be served. If you obey Him out of fear, He has no pleasure in your obedience. The evil one himself might be served on that principle. He offers you a covenant of love on His part, and it must be accepted by you and carried out in the spirit of love.

And there is one thing more that you should remember and cherish as an invaluable truth. As you do not thoroughly apprehend the power of God, until you admit that it is infinite; or His holiness, until you understand that it is absolutely perfect; so you have not yet learned to understand His loving-kindness, unless you know that it also is without limit. Let this encourage you

to a cheerful, happy course of obedience. Set your mark as high as possible. Hope for all things. What may you not expect from the love of God ? “ He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ? ”

Set out on your course of life with this persuasion fully established in your minds, and I know not what changes or chances you are likely to meet with here, that shall have power to unsettle it. Remember that the anger of God is reserved for the enemies of Christ—for those that will not receive His gospel—that His lightnings will fall on this side and on that—but you have the promise that they shall not come nigh you. Remember that, when you were enemies, Christ loved you, even unto death ; and doubt not that this love, which was so faithful even then, will never fail you, will leave nothing undone that may tend to your eternal welfare. You are no longer at enmity, for God has made you His child : you are no more at loss for a Daysman to stand between you, for He is come, and hath set you at one. You want no more sacrifice for sin, for God hath provided the Lamb for the burnt-offering. Only open your hearts to receive these blessed truths. Enlarge your affections that you may feel and respond to them. Then you will



indeed be able to sympathize with these triumphant songs of the Prophets, who, in the midst of darkness, saw the coming light and rejoiced in it. You will repeat that confident appeal of the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Your life, as it passes, shall confirm you in your confidence; and eternity shall for ever establish the truth, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## SERMON VI.

## A PRIESTHOOD AND A PRIEST.

HEBREWS iv. 14.—“ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

AMONG the first and most painful effects of the sin of Adam was the interruption of that free communication between God and man, which had existed up to that time. Thenceforth man could not talk with God face to face : the necessity of *intervention*, of a mediator, of a priest, became apparent to the common instincts of the whole human race. This idea was formed and fixed in men's hearts from the very fact, not only that sacrifices, by way of propitiation, must continually be offered to God, but even that these sacrifices might only be presented by the hands of a person

or a caste, duly appointed and consecrated by God Himself for that office.

And, whether it took place by an express command of God, or by a natural sense of right, the fact admits of little doubt, that the office was from the earliest days the exclusive and most valued prerogative of the head of each family—and the birthright of his heir. And so, in every household, both servants and children learned to look up to the patriarch, not only as master and father, but with a still deeper feeling of reverence as *priest*—as their representative with God, as the delegate of God to them. And thus at the same time, as this priest was, in each family, the absolute head and sovereign, men were early taught to respect the priest and the priesthood. And I do not here take into account those extraordinary intimations, which are found in the early history of the Bible, that God required, and that God admitted, the principle of *representation*:—such, for instance, as the mysterious appearance of Melchizedec, before whom even Abraham bowed to receive the blessing—and that strange intercession of Abraham on behalf of Sodom, accepted and sanctioned by God. These facts, no doubt, occurred in order to impress on men's minds, by way of type, the absolute necessity, and the infinite perfection, of the One Eternal Priest.

But the principle itself was sufficiently established in the constitution of every family that worshipped the true God. And even among those nations in which the knowledge of the true God has been long lost, we find to this day, that wherever there is a notion of a God at all, there is also this notion of a priesthood—of a man, or a tribe, whose office it is to present prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the people, and as their representative with God.

And when, in process of time, the *family* of God's choice had grown into a nation, it seemed good to Him so far to modify the existing institution, as to select a tribe from that nation, and a family in the tribe, to execute the office of the priesthood for the whole people. And you know how every circumstance connected with the office among the Jews was calculated to create feelings of the strongest reverence for the man and his calling. Whether we think of the splendour with which the high priest was invested, in his ordination, his dress, his privileges; or the unsparing severity with which God visited the presumption of those who would have taken this honour to themselves; it was clearly intended to teach the Jews, in the most impressive manner, the necessity of a mediator, and the high and holy character of that office. And, no doubt, as the people

looked upon the high priest in his spotless robe of white linen, preparing to enter into the holiest place, where no other foot might tread, amidst the sprinkling of blood and the cloud of incense, they must have felt that, as far as one of Adam's tainted stock could be qualified for such an office, he was fit to go in and plead with God on their behalf.

But to those among the worshippers who were blessed with the gift of faith, all this had another meaning. They were, indeed, deeply sensible of the necessity of a mediator: but when they reflected that this high priest was but chosen from among men—was compassed with infirmity—was bound to offer sacrifices for his own sins, before he could intercede for the people—that his ministrations, on the great day of atonement, did little, after all, for them—that the same ceremony must be repeated again, and year by year again, as long as they lived—that sacrifice followed sacrifice, and priest followed priest, and yet the day of reconciliation came not—the demands of God were still unsatisfied;—these thoughts, daily pressing on them, must have filled them with weariness and despair, had not God enabled them to reach beyond the shadow, and grasp the substance—to see through the sign, and perceive the thing signified.

I have no doubt they learned, even from the succession of high priests, that there must be One True Priest, whose Priesthood should be eternal and unchangeable—not to be handed on to another. In the anointing with holy oil they saw that anointing of the Spirit of the Lord, of which Isaiah speaks, wherewith the One True world's Priest should be prepared for His ministry. The washing of water intimated to them that their Priest should be wholly free from spiritual impurity. The beautiful garments foreshadowed the spotless robe of righteousness, and all the ornaments of grace, in which He would stand before God. And so they learned to put their faith in the mediation of this High Priest, of whom the Apostle speaks in my text—Jesus the Son of God—who, as man, should be a fit representative of the human race before God—as God, should be qualified to stand forward and make terms for us. I do not, of course, mean to say, that the Jews were acquainted with these invaluable truths in the same clearly defined manner and degree in which we have received them. It is expressly laid down as the distinction, that they had not received the promises, but beheld them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them. The types of the Old Testament were not given merely as a general preparation of the Jewish

mind for the coming salvation, or a substitute until it should come; but, to those who looked upon them in faith, they contained, in a sacramental way, the very virtues of that of which they were the signs. And thus, to the faithful Jew, looking forward to the great sacrifice of Calvary, as to the faithful Christian looking backward, there has ever been but One High Priest, and that is Jesus the Son of God.

Let us dwell for a moment on this great mystery, as it is revealed in the word of God to us in these last days; and let us thank God for the privilege we possess of seeing His whole purpose in one view—of living under His completed dispensation, with the advantage of being able to trace its progress from its origin. We see, then, the world separated from God by sin—and the decree sent forth, that man cannot henceforth re-establish his communication with God, but by the mediation of a priest—that no sufficient mediator can be found, till there appear one among the sons of men, who shall be without sin, and so far equal with God, that he may stand between God and man, and *lay his hand upon both*. It is only when we have arrived at a just sense of this want, and the hopelessness, as far as human resources avail, of ever supplying it, that we can understand or value the wisdom and power

and mercy that have been displayed, in order to provide us with the One Priest whom we stood in need of, a Priest so entirely qualified to represent man, and so wholly acceptable to God.

We have, on the one hand, a Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, and can, therefore, have compassion on the ignorant:—on the other hand, a Priest, who when He had made atonement for the sins of the world by His one offering, went and sat down, by His right as the firstborn, on the right-hand of the throne of God—the first of the human race to take His place above the angels of God.

You will observe what a variety of truths are implied in this doctrine of the one Priesthood of Christ, or closely connected with it. The total corruption of our nature by the fall—the infinite holiness of God—the necessity of a mediator—the exclusive right of the Son of God to the office—the divinity of Christ—the manhood of Christ. If any one of these truths be questioned or misunderstood, I do not see how we can receive, or avail ourselves of, the mediation or the sacrifice of Christ.

But I should not have occupied your time in stating a doctrine so clearly expressed in Scripture, and so fully admitted by you all, if I had



not felt that, however clearly expressed, and however fully admitted in words by all professing Christians, it is virtually denied, or perverted, or explained away, as much as any of the other foundation-truths of Christianity. And I will endeavour to direct your attention, by way of caution, to one or two of the fallacies by which, principally, you will be in danger of being led away from this truth. The two leading propositions on which this doctrine is founded are, first, that a priest is absolutely necessary to our communication and reconciliation with God; and, second, that Christ, and Christ alone, is the Priest appointed for that purpose. If either of these propositions is denied, the doctrine of Christ's Priesthood, the main argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, falls to the ground.

Then, first, let me remind you, how many there are who fully admitting the necessity of a priest to stand between them and God, yet rob Christ of this office and honour, and give it to one of their fellow men; thus rejecting the representative provided for them by God, and contented with the miserable pretensions of sinful beings like themselves. This error, in its full growth and perfect development, is to be found among those idolatrous nations of the east, who have so accustomed themselves to a false notion of the

priesthood, that they hold religion to be the business of a caste; and think that, provided they support a tribe for this purpose, they themselves have a dispensation for a life of indolence and sensuality. But we find it nearer home—the same falsehood, under a somewhat more specious dress:—it is the very life and strength of the Church of Rome. The faithful among the Jews were enabled, as I said before, to look through the visible and palpable, and apprehend under it the spiritual and eternal. Is it not strange that men should be found, who reverse this process; and when the substance is in their hand, wilfully cast it away for the sake of the shadow—wilfully throw themselves back into the infancy of the Church, and cling to ceremonies, emblems, and types? Whereas the Scripture says, that the Priesthood of Christ is unchangeable—that after Him ariseth no other priest—they yet make to themselves a priesthood, and their priests pretend to exercise all those offices which belong exclusively to our Great High Priest, sacrifice, and intercession, and mediation.

But we must look still nearer, if we would see how we are in danger of falling into this error. It is widely spread and deeply rooted among ourselves—it is rooted in our very hearts and natures. Without any authority from Scripture to regard

the ministers of Christ's church otherwise than as teachers, and pastors, and spiritual rulers, something like the idea of a priesthood is yet, even among ourselves, popularly attached to their office. And this becomes a snare to the thoughtless professor of Christianity in many ways. For he learns to attach an undue and mysterious efficacy to the simple acts of a brother Christian, to the delusion and danger of his soul: so that it shall often happen that, when a man has passed a life in blind ungodliness, in self-indulgence, in pursuit of gain, or mere degraded sensuality, the simple visit of a minister of God's word, and a few prayers said by his bedside as he lies dying, shall give him hope and peace—a false hope and a false peace—as if now he had enjoyed the offices of an authorized Mediator, and was safe. And if we consider that these false grounds of hope are sufficient to comfort those also who stand around a death-bed, we must confess that the error is active and destructive amongst ourselves. And akin to this is the mistake, so common amongst us that almost every one who hears me must be conscious of having entertained it more or less, of those who shall, without any authority of God, demand a higher and stricter measure of holiness from those who are called to the ministry, than from the ordinary members of

the Church ; and of course, conversely, are contented in themselves with a far lower scale of conduct and character, so long as they are not engaged in that office. Now I believe that this widely spread error has its root in some sort of confused notion, that a Christian minister is a priest, strictly so called, whose office leads him to serve God and stand in His presence, more nearly than other Christians. And this notion is false and unscriptural ; because in the very same sense in which he is a priest to God, all Christians alike are called to be priests.

But I said that the other proposition, viz., of a priest's intervention being, in all cases since the fall, absolutely necessary to man's salvation, is commonly denied in the present day. And this is a snare of false doctrine to which I believe we are now more exposed even than the other. Modern literature of the most popular kind is saturated with it : and it is so specious a falsehood, so flattering to human pride, so attractive to what are called the generous impulses of our nature, that one cannot wonder at the success it meets with.

Of course all persons deny the necessity of an appointed priest, and so rob Jesus the Son of God of this honour, who hold, or who represent, that man ever can be reconciled to God, or accepted

by God in His own person, without His intervention. Now do you not recognize the poison that is infused into so much of our modern literature? Is it not the fashion now-a-days so to magnify the intellectual greatness of particular men—to claim such homage for mere strength of mind and natural energy of will—as to imply, if not in so many words to express the conclusion, that such a character, so richly endowed, so highly cultivated, must be qualified to stand before God in its own strength—may even be regarded as inspired, invested with a character and entrusted with a mission as a Prophet or Priest, for the enlightenment and improvement of his fellows? You cannot read the life of any of our distinguished men of letters of late days, without seeing how this pernicious falsehood is a principal element in the homage which is offered to them. Only let a man be remarkable for the natural gifts of genius, imagination, wit, or learning; and, though he may have been entirely a stranger to Christ, His life, and His gospel—though he may even have been a slave to the more offensive vices which the refinement of all educated men condemns—yet a hope and even confidence will be expressed in the ultimate salvation of his soul; and you will be held uncharitable and narrow-minded, if you suggest that “Christ is the Way, the

Truth, and the Life, and that no man cometh unto the Father but by *Him*."

And as great natural gifts of the intellect are thus falsely set up as a passport into the mansions of our Heavenly Father, so with still more of subtilty and plausibility are the moral graces of some men's natural characters made a ground for questioning the necessity of the Priesthood of Christ. You read the description of a character full of natural beauty, though destitute of the grace of God; abounding in the capacities of spiritual life, but untouched by the heavenly fire that gives life: you read of generosity unbounded, of a loving trusting heart, of an open hand, of a thirst after truth, and a candour in the search of it, most uncommon in the midst of the perverse and crooked ways of this world: and, though you learn that the truth of the Gospel has been set before such a mind and rejected—that the mediation of the One Priest has been offered, and refused—you are challenged, almost triumphantly, to deny to such a character an entrance, on its own merits, into the kingdom of heaven. The necessity of a Mediator, and of Christ as that Mediator, is simply set aside.

I hope that many among you have been enabled to take that first step in manly wisdom—to

realize your true position in the sight of God—to feel your natural separation from Him, and to inquire after the way to be reconciled and to return to Him.

If you have not already had these thoughts pressed upon you, I may very safely venture to foretel that they will one day come into your mind, and, it is to be hoped, assert their paramount importance in your estimation. Whenever that shall be the case, this present question, which may now appear a mere theological statement, will be to you a matter of pressing and intense interest: ‘who will stand before God in my behalf? who will make atonement for my sins? who will intercede for me that I may be safe in the day of wrath?’

Remember that there is no safe ground for comfort or for hope, except that which is revealed in the word of God; and that the one truth, which pervades the whole Revelation from beginning to end, is that which I stated at the first, that God is not to be approached by any child of man, save through the intervention of that Priest whom He has solemnly ordained and consecrated from the foundation of the world; of whom the Patriarchs and Aaron, and the whole line of Levitical priests, were the types; who in the latter days came in human form upon earth, and, having offered the

One sacrifice, went into the holy place to stand before His Father and our Father. The day of atonement is not yet over for us. Our High Priest is yet within the veil ; and when the evening comes, we, who now stand without, shall not go away from the temple every one to his own house, as the Jewish worshippers did, but the veil will be drawn up, and, if we continue in the faith, we shall go and join our High Priest, and stand before God, a nation of kings and priests, for ever.



## SERMON VII.

## THE TRUTH.

**PROVERBS xxiii. 23.**—"Buy the truth, and sell it not."

THAT love of moral truth in the abstract, which supported the ancient philosophers in their almost hopeless search for it, cannot be too highly commended and admired. It was at once their motive and their guide: for, without the light of a revelation, what guide had they, except their own instinctive feeling of what was true and beautiful? So, whether in the diligent study of the material world, or in secluded communion with their own hearts, with varied success and strangely conflicting results, they carried on their painful search. And though the failure of their exertions was complete, and philosophy may be said to have admitted its weakness by subsiding into

mere scepticism, let not the example, at all events, be lost on us ; at least, let not our love of that truth, which has been miraculously uttered in our hearing by God himself, be fainter and more feeble than that which they felt for truth in the abstract, or for such few and poor sparks of it as were permitted to glimmer for them here and there in their sorrowful darkness.

And observe the difference—for this is the point on which I desire to engage your attention this evening—their regards were placed on *truth* in general—ours are claimed by certain definite propositions, which come to us under the sanction of God as containing *the truth*. They were engaged in the search for truth—feeling after it, if haply they might find it ; we have the object of their search in our hands—we see it, we grasp it, we possess it. Although, therefore, in the one respect before mentioned it is well that we should agree with them, that is in loving the truth, yet, in all other respects, it is but reasonable that our feeling and disposition towards it, and theirs, should differ as widely as our conditions with reference to it.

And chiefly in this particular—that whereas, prior to the authoritative declaration of the truth, to men engaged in the inquiry after it, it was above all things desirable that their minds should be, as far as possible, disengaged from every pre-

judice or dogma, and should come to the work unfettered and unbiassed ; on the contrary, now that a distinct and authoritative revelation has taken place, such a state of mind is most unreasonable and sinful—I mean, of course, in those who accept the Bible as containing the whole revelation of divine truth.

For if it has pleased God to appoint a certain revelation for the instruction of men in the three great subjects of the highest interest, the nature of God, the nature of man, and the way of salvation by reconciling God and man, such a revelation must of necessity be not only *superior* to all other means of arriving at truth, but it must be absolutely *exclusive* of them. The truth, *as it is revealed*, must be to us, henceforth, the whole truth—we must be satisfied with it, we must rest in it.\* The candour that would even grant a hearing to any statement contradictory of the word of God, becomes now preposterous folly—the ambition that aspires to heights of wisdom beyond and above that which is written, is nothing less than ungrateful impiety.

And though this seems a simple truth enough, when thus stated, it is surprising how much it is lost sight of in practice, how very much it is the habit with highly intellectual Christians to philosophize, as if the truth were still to search for,

instead of improving that inestimable gift of the truth, which has once for all been made known to us. I am speaking now of those who receive the truth, and love it, but do not sufficiently rest in it—who approve of it, (occasionally, perhaps, with somewhat too much of the condescension of superior intellect,) but think of it as if it were the elements only of truth—or one view only of truth—or at least such a statement of truth as may do very well for children, or for simple and unlettered persons, while they may pass on to higher stages of speculation and broader views of truth.

And, accordingly, if it should happen to them to pass immediately from the company and conversation of one who knows nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus—whose only wisdom is the wisdom that is from above, the wisdom of faith and love—into contact with a clear head and a subtle mind, able in its own strength to judge and to discourse powerfully on moral truth in general, though utterly regardless of *the* truth—they would feel as if they had ascended from a lower place to a higher—emerged from a confined view of things to a more enlarged one.

And in this lies the error which I am anxious to point out to you. Degrees there are in spiritual attainments and spiritual perception: but

superiority in these is reached, not by leaving the word of God—the revealed truth—and launching again on the ocean of speculation, but rather by cleaving to it, and endeavouring to penetrate into it—believing that there are in it hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which the researches of men and of angels shall never exhaust. And, paradoxical as it may sound, the more closely and rigidly you cleave to the lesson which God teaches you, the larger and more expansive, as well as more correct, will be your views of all those subjects about which human philosophy is engaged. “He shall guide you into *all* truth”—How? “He shall receive of *mine* and shall show it unto you.” “*In Him* are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Know Christ and you know all things—you have gained a point of view from which you shall look abroad on the confused mass of the world’s affairs, and the still more complicated web of human schemes, inventions, and devices for the remedy of acknowledged evils, and comprehend truly all the complaints of man’s nature, their cause, and their cure.

Now, when I tell you that, if you wish to be truly wise, you must straitly resolve to know nothing but that which is revealed, I am well aware of the objections that will meet me from several quarters. One will say that it is a *narrow*

system—that though the Bible is the only direct revelation from God, yet doubtless a goodly portion of truth may be found elsewhere up and down in the world, and that ardent minds should be encouraged rather than checked in so noble a pursuit.

I *might* answer this objection by referring to the well-known history of some who have set out in high hopes on this adventure : but I think the reasonableness of my own position may be very well established by a simple illustration. If you watch the astronomer preparing to make his observations of the heavenly bodies, you will be struck by the extraordinary care which is necessary to secure the due position and the exact adjustment of his instrument. There is a position to be gained, a focus to be caught, that will render his sight clear, and true, and complete : if he miss this, to whatever extent he errs from it, if it be but a hair's breadth, he must in proportion lose something of truth and of distinctness.

I believe it to be even so in the study of spiritual things. The views that men had of God, and themselves, and the relations between God and themselves, prior to a revelation, were distorted, and confused, and indistinct. To every several observer these objects presented a different shape or colour ; and as each man pro-

claimed aloud what he saw, systems and schools of various characters arose—the Stoic and the Epicurean. And now that God has come to our aid, and marked out for us the outlines of truth sharply and clearly, and added, besides, so much that is lovely in form and colour; and has sent His own Spirit to direct our eyes towards it, to throw the light strong upon it, and, as it were, adjust the instrument to our various organs of sight; are we to be called narrow-minded, and bigoted, and partial, if we refuse to look at moral and spiritual phenomena from any other point of view whatever? I believe the comparison holds good to the utmost: and as to the astronomer the slightest relaxation of that scrupulous care with which he maintains his position would produce inevitable failure, so we shall receive loss and damage, if, in our study of things pertaining to God and our own souls, we forsake the exact position in which the revealed truth has placed us.

And here arises another objection:—it is argued that there is a vagueness in this very direction that renders it altogether unavailing—that to speak of *the truth*, or the gospel, or the truth as it is in Jesus, is of no use, so long as this one truth presents itself still under so many different aspects to different persons.

The answer to this is obvious : that, however men's impressions of the truth may vary, the truth itself is ever one and uniform ; that they who see it at all see it only under one aspect ; and that, if we will receive the scriptural account of these things, they only really see and possess the truth, who are taught by the Spirit of God.

No doubt many persons speak of the truth confidently and positively, who have never apprehended it : but that must not hinder us from using the very language of Scripture, though it should make us weigh our words well in speaking of such subjects. And if you will examine your Bibles on this point, you will be struck with the frequency of the very form of expression which I am now considering. "I am the truth." "To this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth." "Coming to the knowledge of the truth." "We know that we are of the truth." Such are examples of a manner of speaking which, you all know, is very common in the New Testament ; and which, on the one hand, points to a certain definitive truth, received and acknowledged by all Christians as eminently *the truth*, while, on the other hand, we are referred to the word of God, and the Spirit of God, to learn what this truth is.

But, as matter of fact, when I thus speak to



you of the truth, am I using an expression which is to *you* vague and indistinct? Does not each of you possess some definite notion of that great outline of truth which God has revealed in His written word? I believe that you do; and, moreover, that making allowance for some variety of expression, in the main the account which each of you would give of the truth would be the same. I do not mean that you have all been enabled, by the teaching of the Spirit, to know the truth with a saving knowledge; but that even to the natural apprehension, the leading outlines of revealed truth are to be discerned readily, and at first sight. And even in those parts of the Scriptures which would seem, on the surface, scarcely designed to convey any part of the great truth at least to us, the general drift and current is obvious and decided. In that book,\* for instance, which we have been reading in our regular course of study during the last three weeks, under the veil of ceremonial observances, you can scarcely have failed to discern some of the grandest principles of Christian truth, laid down with a most marked and impressive distinctness. Indeed, nowhere else throughout the Bible do we gain so clear a view of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, their consequent unhappy separation, and the ab-

solute irrevocable necessity for a priest and a sacrifice of blood. Surely the very repetition of mere forms and directions, in the book of an inspired messenger of God, must press these truths on our hearts as having in them an awful reality, and a particular meaning for each of us.

Assuming, then, that each of you will leave this place of education, to go out to your position in life, with a knowledge of the revealed truth more or less definite, let me bring you back to the point from which we set out, to that lesson of wisdom which is so strongly put before us in the words of my text, "*Buy the truth*, and sell it not." Recollect, a general regard for truth, an earnest inquiry after it, an inflexible resolution to act upon it when you shall have found it, these are not enough, unless you find *the truth*, and believe it, and love it, and live in it. There is, I think, a mistake to which we are all too much inclining at this present day—we set too high a value on those bright and promising qualities in the young—earnestness, and truthfulness, and thoughtfulness; not enough considering that these are nothing in themselves, and that, unless they lead us to the right spot, unless general truthfulness finds its object in the truth, and the true, to the exclusion of every other object, all the promise of such a character is wasted.

If God has given you these qualities in an eminent degree, it is not that you should set out on a dreary and hopeless search after truth, but that you may recognise, and apprehend, and rest in, His own truth; that you may, with that instinctive love of it which He has given you, fasten on it and drink deeply into it; and bear witness to the world that the word of God is true, and that in His revelation is contained all truth.

Indeed when I hear of such a character, as we do now and then, after a restless course, falling away into a hopeless state of unbelief, I cannot but conclude that there never was in it any genuine love of truth at all: for if God had given that, I do not see how *the truth* of God could have failed to commend itself. Jesus said, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. *Every one that is of the truth* heareth my voice."

That many of you will be tempted in this manner, I cannot doubt. There is a growing disposition amongst us to turn away from the narrow line, as it seems, of revealed truth, and strike out, after this or that leader, into new and unexplored and delightful paths of thought. Men will say to you, 'Come with us, and we will show you many a fair tree on which there are wholesome and delicious fruits, which you will not find in

that narrow road.' They will try to persuade you that, even in the conversation and the writings of a declared unbeliever, you may learn portions of the Divine truth which are over and above that which has been revealed. They will bid you look for grapes on thorns. Let not your imaginations be led astray: lest, while you carelessly play about those pleasant meadows, and gather those flowers of thought that shine so brightly and smell so sweetly, the grim tyrant Unbelief come upon you before you are aware, and carry you away to his dark places, where the voice even of the Spirit of God Himself may not reach you ever again.

Therefore buy the truth. If it must be so, go and sell all that you have, and buy this pearl. Give up the ambition of being distinguished as men of original and independent thought. Give up the society of those who lead the taste, and guide the opinions, of your age and your circle. There are intellectual Pharisees, as well as moral Pharisees: and as the one used to despise Him who was the friend of publicans and sinners, so the others are too fastidious to stay at the same lesson which He teaches alike to the intellectual and the feeble-minded. They would rather soar to the skies, or dive to the deep places of thought, in search of truth, than accept it humbly and

simply as it comes from the hand of God. Beware that you are not misled by them. Rather follow the teaching, and court the society, of those who refer all things to the test of revelation ; who are willing to be counted as fools in this world, provided they may be wise towards God ; who may be simple and weak in worldly wisdom, but are strong in the faith and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you, like them, endeavour to *simplify* your faith more and more ; till you literally come to judge of all theories, personal, social, and political, by their agreement or disagreement with the truth of the Gospel. And, believe me, if you do this, you will be taking a truer, a sounder, and a larger view of them, than the greatest of philosophers has ever dreamed of.

You know already, as far as mere natural apprehension goes, infinitely more than human wisdom could ever find out. Endeavour to realize what you have learned. The truth lies all concentrated in the person, the life, the words, and the acts of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. Endeavour to be truly His disciples, to be with Him, to learn of Him, to open your hearts to Him : and believe that, if you do so, according to His pledged word His Spirit shall personally be present with you, and guide you into the truth. "He is the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by *Him*."

## SERMON VIII.

## MAN'S RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT THE SALVATION OF GOD.

2 KINGS v. 12.—“Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.”

I HAVE lately been endeavouring to set before you, as clearly as I could, the real nature of the case as it stands between God and the natural man—how the fall of our first parents has placed the whole race of mankind, as they are born into the world, at *war* with God. For man being by his very nature and by necessity corrupt and sinful, and God being perfectly holy and infinitely exact in requiring obedience to His law, it was not possible that man should ever satisfy God, or be jus-

tified in His sight. And while by far the greater part of mankind were careless about this dreadful state of things, or even contented with it, some few, chosen by the mercy of God from one generation to another, were enabled by His blessed Spirit to understand the truth, and to feel it:—to feel that they were separated from their God, and that this was an evil not to be endured—to feel the high degree of holiness which God required, and the miserable failings and shortcomings of their best doings.

These men—such, I mean, as Abraham or as Job—had it on their hearts from morning till night, as a continual burden, a very heavy weight on their souls, that they had an account to settle with God, and that they could not clear themselves. For it was not a man that they had to do with: then they might have found a judge to settle between them. But between them and *God*—the great God, the jealous God, the terrible God—where should they find a judge? where one who should have authority to stand forward, and arbitrate between them, and set them at one again?

And then their thoughts naturally turned to the *promises* of God—few indeed and indistinct, yet undoubted, promises of *help*, though it might be very distant—the woman's seed that should bruise the enemy's head; the seed of Abraham, in whom

all the families of the earth should be blessed ; the Shiloh who should come from Judah before his earthly sceptre should depart ; the Redeemer who should stand upon the earth in the latter days ; a Redeemer for Job, and for all, even in those early days, who had grace to believe on Him :—just in proportion, I say, as they were sensible of the misery of being separated from God, and at enmity with Him, they were enabled to embrace, and to value, and to cling to, the hopes of pardon and reconciliation, held out to them in the coming Saviour. Now, observe, the whole race of mankind were in the same evil case : but they were not all waiting with the same longing desire for the consolation of Israel. Many did not know their real condition ; others did not care about it, though they knew it ; and others again, knowing it, and being troubled at it, yet were unwilling to look for help to the only quarter where help was really to be found. And this accounts for the most astounding fact in all the world's history—the fact which St. John states in a few simple words—“ He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” The Son of God, who might have come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all who would not receive him, came, under the name of Jesus, as a Saviour, a Redeemer ; and men took Him, and put



Him to a shameful death. This is a most startling fact, if you will but consider it well and lay it to heart.

Now I think that Naaman, the Syrian captain, is a character that may furnish us with a very useful lesson on this point. There may be some one or two persons here who are precisely in the temper of mind in which he spoke the words of my text. At any rate, we are all more or less liable to that same temper; and so, the consideration of his character and history may, by the blessing of God, be useful to all of us.

His story is familiar to you all. He was the favoured servant of a great king; a man whose skill, and strength, and courage, had advanced him to a very high position in the world, so as to make him an object of admiration, and perhaps of envy, to those around him. There is little doubt, moreover, that his riches and his power had exercised an evil effect on his character, as they always will do, unless there is grace in the heart to counteract them;—he was proud, and hasty, and self-willed. But, proud as he was, envied and admired as he might be, he was far from being happy. His was just such a case as we often see in the world—only one thing wanting to make a man perfectly happy; and as long as that one is wanting, he might as well have nothing at

all. Woe, indeed, to them that look for perfect happiness in this body of sin. So Naaman was rich and powerful, honoured and feared:—*but* he was a *leper*.

There could not have been a more dreadful visitation for a great and a proud man than this. Leprosy in the east, where it appears in its worst form, is a very *humbling* kind of disease. It makes a man offensive to his friends, and loathsome even to himself. We read a great deal about it in the law of Moses. Indeed there can be little doubt that God chose to make use of this particular disease, to impress on the understanding of His people the true nature of sin, and to show how dreadful a disease it is in His sight—how offensive, how unclean, how infectious. By the law of Moses, this disorder in particular was to be regarded in a religious light. The leper was to be examined by the priest; and if the priest should pronounce him unclean, then he was shut out from all the services of the tabernacle, driven even from the society of his fellow-men, condemned to keep himself at a distance, and to give warning to all who approached him, by crying out, Unclean, unclean, so that they might beware of coming near to him, or touching him even with the hem of their garment. No medicine could cure this disease. God, who

inflicted it, could alone remove it. The priest could only declare a man to be clean again ; he could not make him so. Hence, when the king of Israel had read the letter of the king of Syria, he said, “ Am I God, to kill and to make alive ? ”

And Naaman was deeply sensible of this dreadful disease that he carried about with him. He felt all that was painful and oppressive in it to himself : still more, no doubt, was he hurt and grieved to see how all men shrunk from him and avoided him. The disease in his case was most likely at that stage when, as in the case of Gehazi afterwards, it was plainly visible to all the world, but yet was not contagious, and permitted the leper to go in and out among men as usual. He felt the burden and the shame ; but he was not humbled, nor softened by it. When he set out, at his king’s desire, to go to the land of Israel, it was not with the faith and humility of the poor leper who met Jesus coming down from the mount, and cried saying, “ Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” He went with chariots horses and slaves—with money in his hand to buy his health, and with pride in his heart—with pride, and with contempt of the whole land and people of Israel—their King, their Prophet, and their God.

And God, who had good things in store for

him, met him according to his temper and disposition. He, who listens to the first prayer of the humble and contrite sinner, has an answer also for the proud. Naaman's wealth and renown, his armour and his chariot, were nothing to the servant of the King of kings. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean."

Well : here was the secret that was to restore him to health and happiness, to self-respect and dignity. Here at last was the deliverance that he had so long desired, the restoration that he had sighed and groaned and chafed after. Could any one doubt for a moment how he would receive it? Surely with eager haste, with the liveliest satisfaction, with the warmest gratitude to the prophet and his master. No : "he turned and went away in a rage." His pride was offended. He had expected to be treated with the deference due to his rank. A solemn ceremony, an open display of miraculous power, was what he anticipated. To go and wash in Jordan—what any child, or any beggar, in this despised country might do ;—a river too, so poor and contemptible, in comparison with the noble streams of his own beautiful city ;—he could never stoop so low as that. So "he turned and went away in a rage."

My brethren, we can see his folly : but let us not too harshly condemn it, for fear that, on a little

further consideration, we should be found to condemn ourselves also in some degree :—for undoubtedly, as I said at the outset, we are all of us *liable* to the same temper and the same sin, however the Spirit of God may have graciously led us to Naaman's later and wiser resolution.

For consider, we are all of us spiritually in a worse case than this of Naaman. We are *all* defiled by the leprosy of *sin*. Fit company we are, indeed, for one another ;—for we are all partakers of the same disease from our birth ; so that no one of us can fairly say to his neighbour, Stand apart, thou art unclean, touch me not, like the Pharisee in our Lord's time ; but yet in the sight of God and His holy angels we are unclean. Take the wisest, and greatest, and most generous, and noblest, of the sons of men ; and, in the midst of our love and admiration for such a character, comes the sorrowful recollection, *He too is a leper*.

And, like Naaman, we are sensible of our disease. We feel that we are unclean ; that we have a mortal disease in our very soul, which must be our everlasting death, if it be not healed ; and which, as it is, by the very law of God shuts us out from His presence, and from the company of all that are pure, and holy, and heavenly ; for into that glorious assembly, which inhabits the heavenly Jerusalem, nothing that defileth may enter.

I say without hesitation, for every one here present, that we *feel* this leprosy in our souls, that we know the plague of our hearts, and mourn over it; because, in the words which our Church dictates to us, we have all joined this evening in the most ample and unreserved confession of sin and sinfulness in the sight of God, and prayed earnestly for pardon and restoration, for His healing, and strengthening, and purifying grace : and I must take it for granted, that, in thus confessing and thus praying, you were in earnest, and meant what you said.

So far, then, you are like Naaman :—you feel the disease—you mourn under it—you earnestly desire relief. Now once again : as the remedy was briefly pointed out to Naaman, so has it been declared to you. When you ask the question, “ What shall we do to be saved ? ” the answer is, “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” There are different kinds of sin, without number ; and different stages and degrees of the same sin ; so that perhaps never yet were there two spiritual cases brought to the heavenly Physician, which were in all points precisely the same ; just as perhaps no two cases of leprosy were exactly alike. Yet, for all sinners, of every kind and every degree, there is but one prescription, “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ; ” as,

whatever had been the precise state of the Syrian leper, the Prophet's answer would have been, "Wash in Jordan."

So then you have felt the disease, you have brought it to the Lord, you have received your direction, even as Naaman did. And before you condemn him for his conduct, ask yourselves honestly, how it was with you at first ;—whether you found it an easy thing to follow so simple a direction, and obtain health for your soul at once ; or whether you too found in your hearts something that resisted, something that rebelled, and pulled you back, and pointed out another better way than that, to health and peace and salvation. For, in truth, though the first step towards salvation is the knowledge of sin—the first work of the Spirit to convince men of sin—yet this is not the only step, nor the only difficulty. Many a man, while he groans under the burden and danger and shame of his leprosy, yet will not accept the remedy, when it is offered to him. The difficulty still remains, to persuade him to go and wash in Jordan, and be clean.

See how it was when the Lord Jesus Christ came upon earth, and offered health and salvation to the world. He came to those who had been well taught the first principles of Truth, who had learned in the school of Moses—the very best

school for learning what sin was, and what were its evils, and its miserable consequences. And, as Elisha said to Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan," so John the Baptist announced to all sinners, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." And did they welcome their Saviour and Deliverer? did they receive with joy and thankfulness the healing medicine of the Gospel? Ah, no: they, like this leper, were *offended* at the Physician and the remedy; and turned away after their own devices. As he let his thoughts revert to the rivers of Damascus, so they went back to their almsgivings, and fastings, and long prayers in the synagogues, and the incense of the temple, and the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of the heifer; in the vain hope that these things, which were but the rudiments in the school of salvation, would deliver them from their plague. And there is the same feeling in human nature in all ages and all nations;—a reluctance to accept the salvation of God freely and fully, on his own terms. We desire to be cleansed, and to be pardoned, and to be saved; but not precisely in His way. Simple and easy as the remedy seems to be—only believe, and be saved—how few are there who at once accept these terms and find relief! how many, even of those who at last are by the



grace of God made partakers of this salvation, have begun to seek it first by perverse and crooked ways of their own !

Among the members of the Church of Rome, there are thousands, probably earnest in their desire for reconciliation with God, who yet obstinately or ignorantly refuse to take the offered remedy, and prefer the various inventions of foolish or cunning men. They will give money largely for the intercession of their priest ; or they will go through painful courses of bodily suffering in the way of penance : they will wear out their frame in fastings and watchings and pilgrimages ;—anything rather than go and wash in Jordan.

My brethren, let me ask you to look into your own hearts, and see if you can find there any of this strange misguided reluctance to receive God's forgiveness on His own gracious terms. Supposing you to be aware of the disease that reigns in your soul, and its fatal consequences for ever, if it is not thoroughly healed and cleansed before you go hence, have you not experienced these same feelings ? have you not been *offended* at the remedy offered ? have you not been desirous to try some more obvious plan, something that promised better to your natural judgment ?

Perhaps you are offended at the humiliation

which belongs of necessity to this way of restoration. You may have expected to be advised to do *some great thing*, to make some sacrifice, to practise some self-denial, to put forth some distinguished exertion of courage, endurance, devotion; and you are disappointed to find that there is none other way of salvation for you than that which is open to any child, or any of the weakest and most ignorant of your fellow-sinners. You would rather be *doing* something, than thus simply receive all from the hand of God. All this is very natural: the way of salvation which we preach is very humbling to the natural man. Time has made no change in that respect. There is still a reproach belonging to the name of Jesus. The road to salvation still leads through the valley of humiliation. Yet if you wish to be rid of your leprosy, there is no other way than this; if you should come to the prophet an hundred times over, he has but this answer, Go and wash in Jordan.

And as some of you may have been offended at this remedy, because it is so easy and so simple, others again may have shrunk from it, because they cannot understand *how* it should make them well—they cannot see how the blood of Jesus Christ can work this wonder for them. Other remedies commend themselves at once to

their reason. A man has been a slave to a bad habit, and cures himself of it by a great effort of his will—*that*, say they, is a reasonable mode of proceeding—we can see and understand how *that* way works.

Believe me, brethren, all such methods, good as they may be for a particular purpose, never touch the root of the disease. Sin is not so easily remedied: the leprosy is not to be got out of the blood by washing in Abana and Pharpar. You may do a good deal by this effort and that to patch up the tattered garment of your own righteousness, so as to make a fair show before men; but there is only one robe in which you may appear before God. Go and wash in Jordan. You cannot see how that will cure you? Go and try. Be entreated, as Naaman was by his wise and faithful servants. He did not understand, till he had tried. It is a want of faith that keeps you from doing as he did. Go and wash seven times—that is, freely and fully give your soul up to God, to be washed all over, and washed abundantly, in the blood of Christ.

And then you will understand, what none can understand save those who have tried it, how the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin—how it purifies the soul from all that was impure and unsound and corrupt—how it sends a

new life circulating through the soul, full of health and strength—and continually supplies fresh vigour from within, so that the foul disease can never find a home there again. You will go into Jordan, covered with the spots and blemishes and scars of the leprosy ; and you will come forth, renewed and restored, as a little child.

May God give grace to all here present to find health and salvation in those healing waters !

## SERMON IX.

### REGENERATION.

**JOHN iii. 7.**—"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

It is said of one of the wise men of the old world, that, whenever a new disciple came and asked to be admitted to his instructions, he required a long and severe course of self-discipline by way of preparation. Five years, as some aver, of absolute silence and retirement, the renunciation of all worldly pursuits and pleasures, with many a tedious ceremony besides, were considered necessary to purge the soul of a man from its base and earthly ingredients, and to qualify him to begin the study of wisdom.

When Nicodemus went by night to speak face to face with Jesus of Nazareth, and to ask Him

of His doctrine, he was received in like manner. He came to satisfy all the anxious questions which filled his heart concerning the Christ, His teaching, and His kingdom ; and he was met at the outset with a harder saying than ever Pythagoras uttered. For the system of the philosopher had been wrought out by the wit of man ; and with due preparation other men might with certainty attain to it ; but the wisdom of Jesus was not of *man, nor of earth*—the mind of man, however trained and exercised, could not attain to it. It was of God, far out of the reach of man's highest intellect, only to be understood by those who had in some way been made partakers of the Divine mind. Therefore said the Lord at the first, as a preliminary condition, apparently before He proceeded to speak of the main question between them, " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Of the theological questions that may arise in connexion with this subject, I have no desire now to speak. Important indeed they are, and very necessary it is for those, who have been called to the office of teachers in the Church, to have their minds made up concerning them. But, after all, questions of form, and means, and subordinate agency, are as nothing, in comparison with

this grand truth itself—the grand pre-requisite to salvation — the first gift of the grace of God. And indeed the continual discussion of such questions as these, though it ought to lead us to a deeper apprehension of the truth, too often has the opposite effect of diverting our attention from it. The fine gold becomes dim with so much handling. By the time the theologian has forced the heavenly mystery into the narrow limits of a definition, it has lost much of its strength and beauty ; and the regeneration described by divines is apt to be something very unlike that beginning of life spoken of in the Scripture, of which God the Holy Spirit is the Author, and everlasting life the consummation. And it is so easy to define, and argue, and cavil ; so hard to commune with our own hearts, and answer for ourselves these necessary questions, ‘ Am I then thus born again ? am I one of the brethren of Christ ? Is God indeed my Father, and is His kingdom mine by right of inheritance ?’

The truth itself which is contained in the words of my text, so far from being reserved and kept out of sight in the system of the Gospel, is, as I before observed, the truth which meets the inquirer at the very threshold of his Master,—“ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” For this was one great part

of the curse, and of the misery of Adam's race :— even when God had provided His wonderful plan of mercy and salvation, when the Lamb was found for the burnt-offering, and the Priest was ready, man could not, as he then was, receive or value the gift. The swine can see no lustre in the pearl which he tramples under foot : no more can the natural man understand, or appreciate, or receive, the inestimable grace of God. Nor, of course, can any training remedy the fatal incapacity ; because it is essential to the natural man. Therefore this also must be the work of God : and for this He has provided an Agent. He that sows the good seed, the Same prepares the heart to receive it. He gives man a new heart, or he could not receive it at all.

And this truth, though perhaps it is nowhere so positively stated as in the passage now under consideration, is nevertheless implied in the whole course of Christian teaching. It is implied in all the doctrine of the Apostles, and by none more constantly than by St. John himself, that they, who are addressed as the saints, have been born anew of the Spirit of God—have entered into a new spiritual condition—have ceased, in some way, to be what they were by nature ; and have become something else, by the supernatural influences of grace. And upon this supposition



only are they addressed. The statement of their condition, and privileges, and prospects, and duties, is made on this supposition, and is totally unintelligible without it. Marvel not, therefore, that it is said unto you, Ye must be born again.

And do not consent to lose the full force and value of this truth, on the ground that it is expressed in *figurative* language. All spiritual truth must come to our natural apprehension under a figure. The question is, must we not expect that the figure, let it be the strongest of which human thought and human speech are capable, will yet fall infinitely short of the truth signified by it? May we not feel sure that, when strong language and startling illustrations are used in the Holy Scriptures, so far from being exaggerated, they must needs be, from the very nature of the case, wholly inadequate in themselves to be the expression of divine truth? We shall be treacherous expositors of the word of God, if we explain away all the burning words and glowing images by which St. Paul struggles to express this truth, as if they were only a strong form of inculcating amendment of life and reformation of manners. We should rather try, according to the measure of our faith, to go along with St. Paul in spirit; to soar higher and dive deeper into the truth to which his words direct us.

And see how uniformly strong and clear the Scripture is on the nature of that change which the Spirit of God works in those who shall be saved. I will not dwell on the numerous passages in which this is implied, viz. all those which speak of the natural man, the old man, the carnal or fleshly mind, as being not only estranged from God, but essentially repugnant to Him, and worthless for His purposes of mercy. But where the necessity or the fact of the change is insisted on, I would have you observe how it is invariably described:—not as an amendment, not as a reformation, not as a remodelling of old materials, not as a change of shape, of structure, of habits;—but as a *new birth*, a *new man*, a new creature, a new life, a new being:—and this too in all the strongest forms of expression; the death unto sin being placed in close contrast with the simultaneous new birth unto God—“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.” “Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” “We have passed from death unto life.” “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.” “Thou art no more a servant, but a son.” However much the thing itself, signified by such language, may be above the reach of our under-

standing, we cannot doubt that these words do contain a specific truth of the highest importance.

And St. John is in one passage even more explicit. His way is, as you know, to hand down, in short and weighty sayings, the sum of that wisdom which he derived from the Author of all truth. He says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The two natures are essentially different. You may take the fairest example of the flesh, that is, of the natural character, and you may set it off to the best advantage; you may train it, and educate it, and adorn it with every embellishment—no doubt it is capable of great excellency within certain limits; but, after all, it is but flesh—it has not even the seed of eternal life in it.

The active genius and skilful hand of the sculptor shall produce, from a block of stone, a form in all respects resembling the form of man, even to its fairest features and most delicate proportions; but, after all, it is but stone—there is no life in it. Just so "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It would almost seem as if St. John had been commissioned expressly to put on record, for the good of the Church, this essential opposition between flesh

and spirit, between the *natural creatures* and the *spiritual sons* of God. His first epistle is full of this contrast. It is, from beginning to end, a statement of this grand truth under a great variety of form and expression. Enough for our present purpose may be gathered from the use of the term—*born of God*, and the description he gives of the characteristics belonging to it.

We learn, from his first epistle alone, that he who is born of God, 1st, “Believeth that Jesus is the Christ;” that is, accepts Jesus for his Christ, his Prophet or Teacher, his Priest, and his King or Master. 2nd. He “overcometh the world.” 3rd. He “sinneth not.” 4th. He “cannot sin.” 5th. “He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

Without entering particularly into the force and meaning of each of these expressions, it is clear enough from the whole, that this new birth and this spiritual life is a great reality, and, as respects our conduct here and our prospects hereafter, all-important.

And as to the origin of this spiritual life, Holy Scripture contains but one statement. Various as the agency may be by which it is brought about, the one only Author of it is the Spirit of God. When man was first formed after the image of God, He, the Maker, breathed into his

nostrils the breath of life. And when the same God is forming a new man, not of the dust of the ground nor of flesh, after the perfect image of His own Son, still He, and He alone, communicates the life. The Son, exercising in the Church His Father's power, giveth life to whom He will. Marvel not that you cannot see with your eyes, or understand in your mind, the process of this new birth—that the first hours of this life are often faint and indistinct—hard to be identified by the bystander—not at all remembered by the full-grown man. There are mysteries as great as this in all that belongs to the natural birth, and infancy, and growth. Only believe in the fact—that there is this new generation—that it is exclusively the work of God—and that it is absolutely necessary for those who would see the kingdom of God, and enter into it.

So much therefore for the doctrine itself, as it is very clearly stated in Scripture. Many, like Nicodemus, have marvelled at it: many have been unwilling altogether to receive it: and yet it is not only positively stated and implied in the word of God, but the whole scheme of Christianity would be incomplete and inconsistent without it. It might very easily be shown, that the beautiful system of morality which the Gospel teaches, its law of love, and faith, and hope, is useless for all

practical purposes, unless the fact of a new birth of the soul is supposed.

I shall only attempt to notice two or three practical questions that arise on the subject, and most obviously require an answer. And, first, as to the *necessity* of being born again of the Spirit of God. There are some who think that the doctrine of the corruption of our nature is often stated more strongly than is true or right; that men are discouraged when they are told, without sufficient warrant of Scripture, that their whole nature is corrupt; it were better surely for the preacher to draw out and foster what he can find of good or of tendency to good, than to cast all aside, and to pronounce all worthless in the sight of God. My answer to this is, Search the Scriptures—see what God has told us of our nature—see how He speaks of it. You will find that the nature of man is, many times over, pronounced to be essentially and radically corrupt: and if that does not satisfy your doubts, then search and see whether I have fairly stated this doctrine of regeneration, or not. And if you find that I have fairly stated it—that the change, described in Scripture as requisite to salvation, is invariably described as nothing less than a new creation—if too you nowhere read that the natural man, with any improvement or modifications whatever, can become

acceptable to God, or regain his lost communion with Him—then the necessity of regeneration must be admitted. It is a question which may be solved by a faithful reference to the word of God.

Again the question may occur, What is the practical benefit of this doctrine? why must this hard saying be insisted on, and made so prominent, in all Christian teaching?

Because it teaches the stranger how great a thing it is to become a Christian; and, which is more to my present purpose, it reminds the child of God of his high condition and privileges.

I say, it reminds the child of God of his high condition and privileges, that he is, in very truth, a child of God, and has a right freely and fearlessly to call God Father. I know that, in one sense, God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, inasmuch as He is their Creator and Preserver. And there are some preachers of Christianity who very much insist on this truth, and would have all men regard God as their Father, without reference to this spiritual regeneration, whereby He becomes especially the Father of all who believe in His Son Jesus Christ. This, I think, is a specious and dangerous error: for God is, in truth, the Father of those only who are born again of the Spirit. In them only

does He see His own likeness—His own image restored and reproduced as it was at first. *They* can call upon Him as their Father, in a very different sense from that in which he is the Father of creation.

This then is the high condition of those who are indeed the sons of God, and on this depend all their privileges, their hopes, and their motives. On this assumption only can they appropriate the promises of God to His people, His Israel, His family. On this supposition only can they hope to attain to holiness in this life. The best condition of the natural man presents a very limited promise of goodness: but when men feel that they are of the very family and seed of God, it is obvious that no limits can be set to their aspirations. To them it is a reasonable and a sober expectation that they may be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect. And then, for their encouragement, they feel and believe, that as their life is of God, so it must be very dear to Him; and that He will make it His care to preserve and train and strengthen it to life everlasting.

I say all this to you in the way of remembrance. You *profess* to be, in this sense, the children of God. The whole of our Church system of prayers and services takes this for granted, from the baptism of the little child to the burial



of the old man. But we all want reminding of what we profess. Multitudes have not any good ground, according to scriptural tests, for their habitual profession: and many of those who have a good foundation, still need continual stirring up to a sense of their position, its dignity, its value, its privileges, its requirements. They call themselves, and even believe themselves to be, the children of a heavenly Father, and heirs of a heavenly kingdom; and yet walk too much as if their home and their inheritance were here on earth.

But there is one more question to which I must shortly advert. It is the anxious, doubting inquiry of many an individual soul, who hopes and fears, and has no satisfactory assurance in himself that he is born again of the Spirit of God. Seeing indeed how immense are the interests at stake on the question, it need not surprise or discourage us, if, in any particular case, a whole life should be passed in doubt and care and anxiety, before that full assurance of faith is reached, which is the only certainty that a Christian has a right to expect in this life.

You will be disappointed, if you expect to find any more positive pledge of salvation in your particular case, than is contained in those promises of God to all His children, on which the souls of the faithful have always rested in con-

fidence and security. The Apostles *believed* and *loved*. Their faith and their love were the best evidences of their life; just as breathing and walking are ample proofs of our natural life. It would be strange if a child were always wanting *proof* of the relation between himself and his father, instead of resting satisfied and confident in his father's love. Therefore, if any one here is suffering from such doubts as I have alluded to, I believe the counsel of the Scriptures to be simply this. If your doubts proceed from the consciousness of sin permitted and indulged, they are well-founded, and must remain until the sin is repented of and forsaken. If, on the other hand, they arise only from a general dissatisfaction with the state of your affections and the strength of your faith, cease to weigh and test and examine your own sensations. Look out of yourself, and cast yourself on the free grace, and the large promises, of God in Christ. Are they not free and large enough? Love Him, and trust Him, and evermore pray to Him: and He will increase your faith, till it comes to full assurance.

## SERMON X.

## THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

ROM. xii. 1.—“ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

THE first great purpose for which our Lord Jesus Christ came forth from the Father was, as we gather from the word of God, to make an atonement, by the sacrifice of Himself, for the sins of the whole world. The second was, to sanctify His Church, to purify His redeemed unto Himself, as a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

He came therefore as a Teacher of Righteousness,—not indeed annulling the law and the prophets, but fulfilling them,—putting a life and fulness into the meagre letter of the law, which none but they who were taught of God, like David, had ever been able to apprehend.

But it is to be observed, that all his lessons of holiness were addressed, as far as we are informed, to *His disciples*—to those who had already laid the foundation of repentance and faith—who loved Him, and followed Him, and received His doctrine, as far as it was given to them to understand it. And it is evident, from the manner and the argument of His discourses, that they could only have been addressed to such persons. For, in the Sermon on the mount, his hearers are repeatedly appealed to, as having a position, a relation to Himself, and consequently motives, peculiar to themselves, and distinct from all the world besides. “Ye are the light of the world.” “Ye are the salt of the earth.”

And when, just before His departure from them, He began to speak plainly, and to prepare their hearts for the wonderful things soon to be revealed to them by His Spirit, He taught them further, that in their union with Himself would lie their power to live according to His law. “Abide in Me. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.”

So much then is evident, that all our Lord's exhortations to holiness, all His rules for godly living, are based on the supposition of a certain relation to Himself, as a necessary condition.

Consequently we have no warrant to apply His exhortations, or His rules, to any other case. And this deserves notice: because there are always those who profess to admire and receive the moral teaching of Jesus Christ, while they reserve to themselves the right of rejecting altogether the conditions without which that teaching cannot be practised, nor even understood. They vainly expect to enjoy all the advantages of Christian morality, without pledging themselves to a single article of the Christian faith.

The Lord's method is strictly carried out in the school of His apostles. But it is far more apparent in their teaching; inasmuch as the knowledge of their own relation to the Head of the Church was not fully revealed to them, until He had gone away to His Father, and sent the Comforter to teach them all things. It is eminently characteristic of the writings of St. Paul, that he was careful to lay a good foundation, before he went on to beautify and adorn. He made clear the first principles of Christianity, before he proceeded to particular laws of practice.

The passage which I have read as my text, is well suited to illustrate my meaning. It is the introduction of a short and summary statement of rules for Christian conduct; and it plainly asserts that all which follows is the necessary or

natural consequence of that which had gone before. "I beseech you *therefore*, brethren." Now the substance of all the former part of the epistle is briefly this—an account of the relation in which the Christian stands with God, through His Son Jesus Christ. The apostle reminds us, that the law of God, written or unwritten, it matters not which, had convicted all mankind of sin—that of His free mercy He had offered to all, while yet His enemies, forgiveness and salvation in Christ alone—that all who faithfully accepted His offer were thenceforth cleansed from guilt, forgiven, received into his family—no more slaves of sin, but children of God—no more exposed to condemnation from God, for God was their friend—no more in danger of the judgment of Christ, for Christ Himself had died to save them from judgment.

In a word, in accepting the offered salvation, the Christian is made one with Christ, and, by virtue of that union, enjoys all the rights and blessings of a son of God. And then, following the gracious example of His Master, St. Paul, by a striking figure, places this mystery within reach of the simplest understanding. The Christian, he says, is an olive branch grafted into a fruitful tree, partaking of its life, and strength, and health.

And *therefore*—seeing that these things are

so—considering this wonderful and most blessed condition of a new life, new relations with God, new principles, and new motives—“*therefore*,” he continues, “I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

And this order of teaching is apparent as well in other writings of the apostle, especially in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. In both he begins by laying down, you will recollect with how much fulness and seriousness and vigour, a statement of the Christian’s position and character in his new condition, describing him under various figures, as one who had been “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son;” who had been buried with Christ in baptism, and was risen again with Him to a new life; and now accepted in the Beloved; a member in that body of which Christ was the head; a stone in that building of which He is the foundation.

And yet, though a very great variety of expression is used, I think the idea most prominent in the apostle’s statement is *union with Christ* in the Spirit—the union which is enjoyed by faith, and by the consequent possession of His Spirit. This union with the Son of God,

with all its attendant blessings, is the foundation which the apostle, in both the Epistles above-named, lays down in all its wide and massive grandeur, before he ventures to place a single stone of the beautiful Christian temple. The rest follows naturally and easily ; still, as in the case before us, by way of consequence ; “ I ~~therefore~~ beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” “ If ye *then* be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

So then the doctrine of Christ and His apostles (hard lesson for the human heart to learn !) is, that the favour of God comes *first*, the obedience of man comes last ; that pardon and life and health are the free gifts of God, and form the basis on which Christian perfection must be reared.

And if ever man, in the pride and presumption of his heart, attempts to reverse this the order which God has appointed, he can meet with nothing but failure and ruin. He says, ‘ I will take a reasonable and obvious course. My way to the favour of God shall be through obedience. Holiness will lead me to life and health. I will follow the teaching of St. Paul ; but I will invert the order of it. I will learn and practise his lessons of virtue—those rules of conduct in which



he speaks to me in all capacities, as father or son, master or servant, ruler or subject—and, by a close observance of these, I hope to attain to that beautiful relationship, that intimate union, that divine life in Christ, which St. Paul describes.' You shall sooner invert the Great Pyramid.

If man had never fallen, this reasoning would have been good and true. He had then a position with respect to God, and he kept it by obedience. He enjoyed the favour of God by right of his sinlessness. But it is not so now; and that position must be regained, before we can even do works which shall be good and right in the judgment of God. It has been regained for us all, and it is freely offered to us. But it must be accepted as a gift, thankfully, and in faith: it cannot be earned. We may afterwards take our part in adorning and beautifying the temple: it is *God's* prerogative to lay the foundation. With that we have nothing to do.

But to return to the text. The connexion between that blessed state, which I have described generally as a state of union with Christ, and a holy life, may be regarded under various points of view, any or all of which St. Paul may have had in his mind, when he brought them together as a cause and a consequence.

Thus, for example, he may have intended, as

he evidently did in some passages, to remind his disciples, that if they believed, if they *were* all that they professed, the natural way of *proving* it, was by living a life consistent with their position. "Show me thy faith by thy works." To look indeed at works, *only* as an evidence of faith, is an unsatisfactory way of viewing the matter: yet, no doubt, they serve this purpose, not only in the sight of man, but also—for it matters little what man may think of us—in the judgment of God. Although He searcheth the hearts, and knows what is in man without evidence of any kind, yet it is His pleasure, and a part of the system by which He judges of His servants upon earth, and will judge them at the last day, that men shall give Him assurance of their faith by a loving obedience, such as a child, in simple, unaffected confidence, renders to his father. It was for this that He tempted Abraham. On this principle He said, "*Now I know* that thou fearest God," though in truth He had read his heart from the first.

Or, again, St. Paul may have wished to teach that a holy life is the natural and spontaneous fruit of a union with Christ. And this may account for the general and cursory nature of his directions, so singularly unlike the formal and precise rules which those moralists have

been forced to draw out, who knew of no way to God save by laws of their own making.

Questions, which, apart from your state as Christians, would require much examination and long exhortations, are dismissed in general terms. You are merely reminded that those sins, which were natural to you when unconverted, must be regarded now as in the highest degree unnatural, and not to be thought of. On the contrary, now that you are in union with Christ Himself, partakers of His nature, sharers in His Spirit, it is obvious that you will follow after whatsoever things are true, and lovely, and of good report. Or if questions of conscience should arise, they may require a more particular consideration ; but they must be settled with reference to the same general principle—you are members of Christ, and, in Him, members of one another also.

And if a holy life is the spontaneous fruit of union with Christ, it must be without effort and without pride ; in one sense even without self-consciousness. “Lord, when saw we thee an hungred ?” will be the answer of those, whose lives were spent in ministering to Him.

By this test also we may distinguish between the genuine fruits of the Spirit, and those counterfeits which pass current too often in the world. Among these I cannot but reckon those habits,

which many good men have thought it right to encourage in themselves and others, by the sanction of some self-imposed law. In old times, Orders of one kind or another; in our own days, Associations, with vows or pledges, have attempted to bind themselves by a great effort to exhibit some one grace which is, in fact, a very ordinary fruit of membership with Christ. All such works, when sifted by the eye of God, will be proved, I think, to be altogether of the earth, and have their reward on earth. They are not the natural fruits of the true vine. They are imitations only, hung on the branches, in the vain hope that they may grow and flourish there.

Or, once more, St. Paul may have desired to urge upon his readers the necessity of holiness as the consummation of that which had been done for them already, and as a preparation for the crowning blessedness of being with God for ever. This is a view in which the best men have always regarded the subject with most satisfaction. They have felt that the work of their salvation is not yet accomplished, until they have added to their faith virtue; until they have endured temptation; until they have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. They know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" and "having this hope,"

as their ruling and guiding desire, they are diligent to “purify themselves, even as He is pure.”

But in whatever light St. Paul regarded the connexion between the faith and practice of Christianity, it is clear at least that upon this connexion he founded the whole of his moral system. And this suggests to me two observations, with which I shall briefly conclude. The first is, that there is *no moral teaching in the Gospel, except for those who are in Christ Jesus*; that is, for those who truly and in faith have accepted the salvation which He offers, and are partakers of His Spirit. It is supposed impossible that any moral training can benefit man, until He has been justified in the sight of God, and born again of the Spirit; and thus placed in that position from which holiness takes its first step.

The world thinks otherwise. The cross of Christ, and all the wonderful truths that hang upon it—the mystery of sin and of love—are an offence still to the mass of mankind; and they will not see that their efforts after holiness and happiness are utterly vain, until they are established in the faith of Christ crucified, and in union with Him by His Spirit. Yet the Bible leaves us no excuse for such an error. It tells us plainly, that all its golden rules of holy life are illegible, until our eyes have been anointed with

the eye-salve of the great Physician, that they are impracticable until we are endued with power from on high ; that to one who feels truly his relationship to God, as his Father, they are simple, and easy, and natural ; but to him who knows in his heart and conscience that he is yet a stranger to God, they are harsh, and distasteful, and impossible. Unless as a child of God and member of the body of Christ, the Gospel gives no laws of conduct to any man. On that supposition the appeal to motives and principles, desires and necessities, is easy and obvious, and the moral system follows consistently ; on any other supposition there is really no basis on which we can build such a temple as God will choose to inhabit.

. And, in the second place, this observation furnishes us with the means of self-examination. It is a subject on which we very much want inquiry : there will be little power in our efforts after holiness, until we do distinctly apprehend on what ground, and with what view, we are labouring. Still more such of us as are placed in the position of instructors of others, or parents, or masters, ought to settle clearly in our own minds what is the order in which God works for the restoration and salvation of men's souls ; so that we may not waste our labour by attempting to rear the Christian structure of holiness, before the Chris-

tian foundation of faith in Christ and union with Him has been laid.

Rather we ought to remind ourselves, and to warn all those for whom we are in any way responsible to God, that there is a prescribed order of things in the school of Christ, which must not be broken; that the root and foundation of a holy character is in Christ—in the knowledge of Him, in the love of Him, in the possession of His Spirit. Supposing this foundation to be laid, no degree of holiness is too high to be attained—all holiness is the natural consequence of it.

If, on the contrary, we persist in trying to form a character on other foundations:—if we will go on appealing to lower motives, acquiescing in a state of estrangement from God—trying to guide others by the laws of expediency, of honour, of respectability, of custom—or, at the highest, by the natural sense of what is right and wrong:—we must certainly fail. It is not the way in which God has taught us, and we cannot expect to succeed by it.

I do not see why we should not practically carry out the Divine system in all the ordinary circumstances of daily life. It would very much simplify our dealings with our children, if they could see that we had no expectation of educating them successfully, except as living members

of Christ's body ; if all cases of misconduct were treated strictly as cases of sin ; if no motive to good conduct were so much as named, short of the great motives of all,—“if ye then be risen with Christ,” — “as we have received these mercies.”

It may be said, indeed, that on these terms a large majority in every society are practically excluded from moral training altogether ; because they do not even profess to enjoy that spiritual relation with God on which the Apostle's teaching is wholly based. This is true ; and for such persons, as long as they remain such, the principles and the motives, the punishments and the rewards, of this world must suffice. No heavenly objects have any charms for them ; no spiritual law can bind them. They cannot understand the first and simplest principles on which the Christian founds his whole life. Such persons must begin at the beginning ; they must enter at the one door through which all have entered who have obtained eternal life. At the cross of Christ they must leave their guilt and their sins ; in the grave of Christ they must bury out of sight their earthly interests, and hopes, and feelings ; and then He, who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, will give them a new life, new moral capacities, which will enable them to be learners in



His school and subjects of His kingdom. Therefore let no considerations cause those who are Christian teachers to swerve from the doctrine of Christ, or to lower His standard upon any ground of expediency.

Neither let us be afraid of making the Name of Christ too common a thing, by appealing to Him as our head and our guide in all cases. He did not keep His doctrine for the temple only, or the synagogue; but in all places, at all times, by the way side, on the sea shore, at the social meal, His person and His doctrine made themselves felt. Let us not shrink from carrying Him about with us into all the particulars of our daily conduct. In Him only we are complete. By His strength only can we fight the battle of faith. As His members only can we hope for those supplies of grace which He, as a fruitful vine, distributes to all His living branches, that so they may bring forth good fruit unto life everlasting.

## SERMON XI.

## CHRISTMAS DAY.

ISAIAH lix. 16.—“And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor : therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him ; and His righteousness, it sustained Him.”

No part of Holy Scripture is more beautiful than the closing chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah. In them we have the kingdom of Messiah on earth described in words so rich and varied, with images so grand and copious, and with an earnestness so warm and glowing, that surely language can do no more to make men love it and desire it.

But before the prophet was permitted to range at will over these fields of bright and happy anticipation, it was his sorrowful task to tell the tale of

man's sin and helplessness, to describe the darkness, the thick darkness, in which the whole earth lay shrouded, before he might venture to hail the Sun of Righteousness already rising to his favoured view.

It was the consciousness of their actual condition that made holy men of old so long for the promised Saviour; it was the sense of guilt and the curse and estrangement from God, that kept them waiting for the consolation of Israel. As long as men continued unconscious of misery and helplessness; or as long as they hoped for health and deliverance from other quarters; the glad tidings of the prophets, the voice of him that cried in the wilderness, the exultations of the daughter of Sion, were an empty sound to them, literally of no force or meaning.

Accordingly, in the 59th chapter, the prophet endeavours to set forth to his nation the condition to which their sins had reduced them—to explain why it was that, when they prayed to God, He would not hear—when they offered sacrifices, He abhorred them—when they burned incense, it was an abomination to Him. “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.” In truth, since the first alienation of man from God, the separation between them had grown

wider in every successive age—the plague of sin was continually spreading—the darkness of ignorance was continually thickening over them; and to make the case yet more hopeless, for the most part they were not aware of their misery and their danger. And so, comparing themselves by themselves, and forgetting the true standard of the law of God, they went on with the whole head sick and the whole heart faint, and were unconscious of it.

With the Gentile world indeed it could scarcely be otherwise. They had no revelation of the True God granted to them—no law held up as a lantern to their feet. But that the chosen people of God—they who had known His Name, and had been instructed in His law, who had so often felt His mercy, and seen His power exerted to save and to destroy—that *they* too should be lying in the same prostrate condition of sin and of helplessness, was a fit subject indeed for the Prophet's most plaintive lamentations and indignant reproof. "Your hands," he says, "are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth;

and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey."

"And the Lord saw it." How very solemn is this introduction of the name of the Lord, presenting Him to us as looking on, all the time, upon the scene of confusion, and uncleanness, and selfishness, that was passing on earth! "And the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment."

It did not indeed now, as once formerly, repent Him that He had made man upon the earth. He purposed now rather to restore man, and make him fit to inhabit the earth under His eye. "And He saw that there was no man, and *wondered* that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him."

There is something very awful in this divine irony,—as if God spoke in scorn, not at all in compassion; as if He had been looking on at the pitiful and feeble efforts that men made to stand upright before Him, and despised them. For indeed, in the midst of the perversity of mankind, a desire had at all times been felt, and efforts perpetually made, towards a reconciliation with God. The desire is feelingly expressed by Job in the midst of his grief. "How should man be just with God? If He will contend with him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand."

Some even among the Gentiles had patiently and anxiously sought after God, feeling for Him in the dark, if haply they might find Him. Numbers among the Jews continued, through their lives, scrupulously observing their ceremonial law, and looking at the priest and the victim, as the appointed and certain means of reconciliation with God. But neither the wisdom of the Gentile, nor the ordinances of the Jew, could ever purify that soul which was unclean from the womb. Their inquiries and their ceremonies were equally vain. "God saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." Among all the great ones of the earth—those who had lifted up their heads above the mass of mankind, and cried, "Who is Lord over us?"—the heroes and conquerors and kings who had reigned on earth, and been worshipped as gods after death—the sages and philosophers, the prophets and the priests—there was not one found who could stand between God and his brethren, to save them or make atonement for them. Sufficient for each was his own sin. All alike stood guilty at the judgment-seat, and wanted the help of an advocate. God "wondered that there was no intercessor." He had waited long time to see what man could do for himself; and when all his struggles were in vain, then was the time for God to

put forth His own hand. "His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him."

You will observe that these words imply, that a struggle was to take place, before the triumph was to be enjoyed; that the good purpose of God with regard to this world was to be effected, not by a single Divine word, or an exertion of the Divine will, but by much labour and pains. The Prophet saw the Heavenly Warrior arming for the conflict. "He put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation on His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." And from this point there seems to open upon the eager straining eyes of Isaiah a wonderful and many-coloured vision of the coming, yet far distant, acts of the Messiah—His wars with sin and evil angels—how He trod the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Him—how fear, and the curse, and the plague, and death, all vanished away—and a kingdom of peace was established in the world—and a new Jerusalem founded, whose walls are called salvation, and her gates praise—which is lighted, not by sun, nor by moon, but the Lord is her everlasting light, and her God her glory.

Such was the vision, indistinct perhaps and only

half understood, but yet ineffably sublime and heart-stirring, that floated before the soul of the Prophet, and called forth those sacred strains of prophecy.

My brethren, we stand in the very noon-day blaze of that light, which this holy servant of God saw afar off, through ages of gross darkness, yet dim and indistinct. We possess, as historical facts, recorded fully and particularly, all the actions of our heavenly Saviour and Champion, which were barely shadowed out for him, in the vague form of a vision. We are met here this morning to commemorate the first step of our Deliverer—his entrance upon the campaign against all the host of the evil one. It is a day which, by common consent of all who profess to be Christians, has ever been regarded as an occasion of joy : and so it must needs be ; for it was this day that struck the first blow against Satan's kingdom among men. On this day angels first made their music heard amongst us ; on this day the evil spirits first felt that their power was gone. Let us then rejoice on this day. Let us "praise the Lord : for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God ; yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful."

But inasmuch as there are different sorts of joy that may be felt, and which are felt on occasions like this, it will be well for you to see into



the thing a little further, and satisfy yourselves respectively what grounds you have for joy on this day, and of what kind that joy is which you are prepared to indulge.

I said above, that the Prophet was not permitted to conceive or to describe the glories and the beauties of the reign of grace, until he had felt to the utmost the horrors of a state of nature ; that his soul might not pass out into the freedom of the ransomed in Christ, until it had first groaned under the iron yoke and the heavy burden of Satan and of sin. Well then, here you have a test by which you may try your feelings on this occasion, and see whether they are sound, and right, and true ; and bear with me, if I endeavour to introduce some very serious thoughts into your hearts to-day. There are cases in which even "sorrow is better than laughter:" when "it is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."

In order then that you may rightly take a part in the joys of this day, you must have felt the want of a Saviour, as Isaiah did; not assented in general terms to the general wants of mankind, but in your own personal and particular case felt that you wanted some one to come to your aid. You must have become acquainted with sin, not alone in the world around you, but in your own

heart, and have been convinced of its real vileness and deformity. If you have learnt this, the first lesson in the school of the Spirit, you will have learned further, that the God whom you have offended is so infinitely pure and holy, that into His presence nothing can enter that has upon it the merest spot or trace of sin. You will have looked around, and seen that there is no help for you on earth—without, all is tainted with sin; in your own heart, there is no sound part—and then comes in that bitter feeling of Job, “there is no daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.”

If, when you have arrived at this state of mind, in the very crisis of your trial, when desire was turning into despair—if then it has pleased God to reveal to your hearts the blessed Person of Jesus; to give you grace to believe and know that He is that very Daysman, that Intercessor, that Mediator who is Man, and can therefore represent you and answer for you, and undertake for you before God; who is God, and can therefore fulfil all God’s law to the last letter, and can stand as your Champion, and conquer for you all the host of Satan; can deliver you from the guilt and the penalty, the power and the vileness, of those sins which you already loathe and abhor:—then you may indeed rejoice on this day. You

may sing with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." You may join the blessed company of prophets and apostles and martyrs, who have rejoiced, and do still rejoice, to have seen the day of Christ, from Abraham, who looked forward to it through two thousand years, to Symeon, who took the young child in his arms; and from Symeon again to all here present who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and hope for His second appearance.

It is a day of joy to you, because you were weary of the burden of your sin, and Christ was born in Bethlehem to save you from your sins; because you had nothing before you but everlasting death, and Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; because you were tired of the world, its interests, and its pleasures, and Christ has opened to you a new spiritual world of fresh and inexhaustible happiness; has come down to teach you the true wisdom, to bring you the true riches, and give you a taste for the true pleasures.

Indeed you have abundant cause for joy—for joy to last, not here in this life only, but through all eternity:—and if it is the true and the right joy, recollect that it is to last for ever. It *is* the very same feeling that angels and saints in heaven feel. They know no other happiness than this of praising God

for the wonders of redeeming mercy. Therefore see well of what kind your joy is—how felt—how expressed. See if it would stand the test of the presence of God with His holy angels. The joy of a ransomed soul, on the day which began the work of his redemption, should surely be a very sacred, a very exalted, a highly chastened feeling. It should be quite distinct from the thoughtless mirth of cold and careless men. An alien from Christ has no right to it: a stranger cannot intermeddle with it.

I well know that, as a matter of fact, the feelings of the vast multitude of professing Christians, at this season of the Christian year, will bear no such tests as that which I have been proposing. I am not speaking now of the numbers of unhappy beings who simply make this holy day an occasion of unusual indulgence in their sinful pleasures; who, under pretence of honouring the Nativity of Christ, openly violate His Law, and disgrace His Name, and serve the devil, and their own lusts. Their joy shall be turned into sorrow. They are the open enemies of God. To them He appears clad in vengeance. But, in many a family of a very different order, where the day, like other holidays, is observed with much decency, and where it is made the occasion for an exhibition of much kindly feeling, of many domestic affec-

tions, and of good-will and good deeds towards their neighbours,—I say, even among such persons, I fear there are numbers who rejoice on this day, they know not why ; who have never fairly been convinced of their sins ; who have never groaned under the feeling of alienation from God, or thirsted for a reconciliation with Him, or looked in vain for help on this side and on that, or learned by bitter experience that their own kindly and generous feelings, their own charitable deeds, alms, and services, can do nothing to satisfy the requirements of a holy God. And if they have never passed through such discipline as this, I am constrained to say that they cannot welcome Christ into the world with the true Christian welcome. They are as yet strangers to the Christian's love, and therefore to the Christian's joy. The Christian's joy, I repeat, on his Saviour's birthday, is of a peculiar and highly chastened character ; it is indeed one of the ripest and richest fruits of the Spirit. Its root is faith, and the branch that bears it is love, and the blossom from which it springs is hope. It is a mixed feeling, made up of many feelings, closely and curiously intertwined.

There is always in it a *recollection of danger escaped*—light out of darkness—health out of sickness. Such is the idea of the Gospel that pos-

sessed the Prophet's soul: and how perpetually does St. Paul appear to keep before his mind what *he* was, and what his converts were, before the grace of God had called them to salvation, and dwell upon it as an occasion for thanksgiving, a special cause of joy!

Again, *love of the Saviour* is a constant element in the joy of a believer. I have no doubt that one purpose of God, in giving us these details which we possess of the birth and infancy of Jesus Christ, was to encourage in us a direct affection towards His Person. It certainly has this effect in a surprising degree; and the affection thus created, often at a very early age, has much to do with that pleasure which all His faithful followers feel on the return of this day.

And once more, the *hope* of things reserved in heaven, the confidence which Christians have in the love and the power of Christ, their consequent sense of security as to the possession of peace and happiness here, and their title to glory hereafter:—all these feelings combine to fill our hearts with thankfulness, and our mouths with praise.

And yet there must be other feelings than these in our hearts, or our joy will hardly be of that character which befits the occasion, which

peculiarly becomes redeemed souls ; at least so long as the Christian is on the earth, there will always be a tinge of sadness over his joy, softening and chastening it—sadness for past sins of his own, and for the sufferings of his Lord and Saviour. The Christian's sorrow and joy are thus so united as to be in fact inseparable : their springs lie very near together in his heart, and their streams often mingle as they flow ; and hence that calmness, and quietness, and moderation, in which consists the strength of the Christian character.

And this is the true way of harmonizing the various chords of feeling which are struck in the breast of a Christian by the events of his Redeemer's life. These are indeed separately commemorated, in order to recal the several grounds on which the mixed character of the Christian permanently rests ; not in the vain and fond desire to parcel out the sorrow and the joy, as the Church of Rome does for her children, making a scheme of fasting and festival—of Lent and of Carnival—exactng a rigid observance of her fixed times and seasons, so that there must be on all faces, if not on all hearts alike, mirth alone at this season, and grief alone at that. This is, like most of the errors of that Church, a poor caricature of the truth—a very feeble imitation of the

real Christian character, which consists rather in an abiding state of happy seriousness, of sober joy.

While, therefore, you think of all that is bright and beautiful in the story of the birth of Jesus, the angel choir, and the light from heaven, and the star over the place where the young child lay, the virgin mother, and the adoring shepherds, do not forget to follow the young child through the story of His life on earth. Remember that He suffered from first to last; that He came into the world to suffer, and to suffer for your sins; that He was an outcast from His very birth; that His path through life was lonely and dreary; of the people there was none with Him; that He fought your battle alone, armed in His own righteousness only. He was alone in His temptation—alone in His agony—alone at the judgment—alone on the cross. Let these reflections sadden and restrain your joy. Rejoice with moderation, as they who cannot forget their past sin. Rejoice also with trembling, as they who are in the midst of temptation, and may fall into sin again.

Need I again remind you, that there must be nothing sensual, no idle frivolous self-indulgence, no excess permitted, to pollute those holy and heavenly feelings of happiness which belong to this welcome season? You have no need to



borrow pleasure from other sources. If you love the Lord as your Saviour, your Deliverer, your Master, and your God, you have in you a well of happiness, pure, and bright, and inexhaustible. You may shout with the daughter of Jerusalem, for behold "your King cometh unto you." You may "arise and shine, for your light is come." To you is the word sent, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." To you the Lord hath proclaimed, "Behold, thy salvation cometh : behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him."

But it has been wisely ordered by our Church that on this day we should, in the very midst of our joy, commemorate also the death and passion of our blessed Saviour. The cross is the very crown and glory of every Christian's joy—the badge of his freedom—the pledge of his reward—the sign and seal of his salvation. No Christian festival is complete without that feast which the love of our Master has provided for our souls. Let us come therefore to His holy table this morning, with hearts full of love, and hope, and happiness, in simple confidence that we shall be welcome ; that He, who left His glory in heaven, and came down to seek us out and save us while we were yet sinners, will much more now receive us, and rejoice over us, as being reconciled to Him

through His blood. And if you want to enjoy the true delights of love and good-will, of peace and fellowship, where shall you find them in their fulness and their purity, but in this common banquet of all Christians? Here you shall be one with Christ, and, in Him and through Him, one with all who love Him and believe in Him. You shall here find and feel the true unity of the Spirit, the communion of saints. All over the world, on this holy day, this same festival is held, with the very same feelings, the very same expressions of joy. The glow of love and of good-will which animates you, as you feed upon your Saviour's love, shall expand and circulate through His whole body the Church: and not that Church only which is here on earth, toiling on in the midst of its trials and its imperfections, but the whole body of His saints in rest and glory. You are one with them all: your joy is the joy of angels.

May the Lord grant that the bread of life and the water of life, received into a faithful heart, may sustain and nourish you, and make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light!

## SERMON XII.

## GOOD FRIDAY.

LUKE xxiii. 33.—“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him.”

THERE is this great peculiarity in the teaching of the Church, that while, in every age of the world, new doctrines, new views, new systems, are springing up in rapid succession, the Church undertakes to teach no new thing at all. On the contrary, year by year, we have the same facts repeated; as if, by constant importunate reiteration, they might be thrust and driven into our inmost hearts. And thus, while it is the ambition and the glory of the natural man to be for ever in progress, improving, inventing, the faithful preacher of the Gospel says and feels in all sincerity, God forbid I should venture to bring to your ears any novelty, any other story, doctrine,

or system, than the old one which you have heard from the beginning.

And is not our Church in this way a constant witness to the truth? Do not her appointed days and stated services, as they come round year by year, sound in the ears of the world like the faithful warning of the bell that numbers the hours as they pass—monotonous perhaps, and without meaning, to those who have their portion in this world; but full of instruction, and of interest—interest that increases at each repetition of the sound—to those who love the Lord Jesus and hope for His coming? At any rate, to all in this country, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, the warning is given. To every one here present, whatever be his age, once in every year of his life come the sounds in succession—*Christ is born, Christ is crucified, Christ is risen, Christ is ascended*. For eighteen hundred years this has gone on; and it must go on, until He comes again. For, whatever men may say, in these facts, never dying nor growing old, lies the only hope of individual men and of society, in all times and generations.

The fact which is brought to our minds, especially on this day, is, in some sense, the most important of all. It may be regarded as the very centre of the dispensation of God for our de-

liverance—a point of sight from which we may look around into the length and breadth, the depth and height, of the counsels and love of God.

It tells us of sin and of love : of the enormity of that sin, which could not be pardoned without such a sacrifice ; of the depth and strength of that love, which provided the sacrifice. It reveals at once the whole mystery which had been hidden for ages from the inquiring eyes of mankind, or only half manifested under the signs and types of the ceremonial law : it rends the veil, and throws open the seat and presence of God to all mankind.

And let none of us fondly dream that we do not need to have this fact recalled to us. I am afraid we all need it too much. Even they, whose understandings are most enlightened as to the way of salvation, are still in danger of losing their hold of this grand truth, in the crowd and tumult of thoughts and theories and interests that press upon them on all sides in this busy world. Much more is it needful that they should be reminded of it, who have given perhaps a formal assent to the fact and the doctrine, but have scarcely even tried to feel and realize the mystery of the Cross in their own souls. Let us all seek this day earnestly to profit by a humble and

thoughtful meditation on the death and passion of the Son of God.

See Him, then, at the moment when the inconstant Pilate delivered Him into the hands of the people, saying, "Take ye Him and crucify Him," and then vainly washed his hands, and vainly said, "I am innocent of the blood of this man!" See how the foolish people, urged on by their wicked elders and priests, hurry Him along, fainting under the burden of the cross, which weighed down His holy frame, while His soul was infinitely more oppressed with the iniquity of us all, which the Lord had laid upon Him! Out of the city they lead Him; for the Scripture must needs be fulfilled. The sacrifice must be slain without the camp; and He was our sacrifice, the sin offering for the whole world. Well was it for the world, for us, and for our fathers, and for those that come after to all generations, that His spirit did not fail at the moment He passed forth out of the gate—that He persevered in His great mercy and love for sinful man, and set His face as a flint, and was willing to drink the cup to the very dregs. Surely—though the men who surrounded Him cared little for the momentous interests that were then at stake—surely the angels must have looked on with trembling anxiety at that moment, in which the fate of the world

was involved. Surely, if at this time He had drawn back from the painful death, they would have wept bitter tears over a race fallen without hope; while Satan and his evil spirits would have rejoiced and triumphed in the world's final ruin. But, ever blessed be His Name, He did not shrink in that hour. On He went to the fatal spot, to the last trial: and with wicked hands they took the Lord of glory, and drove the nails through His hands and His feet, and fastened Him to the accursed tree, and raised Him up between the two thieves, to the scorn and contempt of the multitude.

And here was the end and fulfilment of the purpose of God in the salvation of man—the mystery that had been hidden from the foundation of the world—hidden from His nearest friends and followers: and yet, without this, we should have been as far from salvation now, as if He had never come on earth at all. For God was angry with the world: and the anger of God is not to be satisfied by any excuse that man can make, or any plea that man can offer. Infinite justice required an infinite penalty. Though Christ had given us a new and perfect law, and left us His own holy example, it would have been of no use to us, if He had not offered Himself up to appease the anger of God, and to bear the

punishment which we had deserved. Therefore look unto Christ on the cross, and be ye saved: it is your only salvation.

With all the weight of the sins of the world upon His head—with every kind of pain and suffering that His human form could feel—His friends far away—His enemies all around Him, and rejoicing in His trouble—yet even then loving His own unto the end, and praying for His enemies,—behold the Saviour on the cross, His arms extended to draw all men unto Himself. And then came His last and greatest suffering. Hitherto He was not alone, for the Father was always with Him: but now even that support was taken away. Alone He was to tread the wine-press; alone to conquer Satan; to overcome sin and death alone. In the agony of His desolate spirit He cried—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" So terrible was the sight, that, although men could look on unmoved, the sun shrouded his light, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the graves were opened. The hard earth and the strong rocks are touched, while the heart of man continues to resist.

And who were the people that surrounded Him and looked on at this wonderful act—this mightiest of all the mighty works of Jehovah—this crisis of our fate? There were all kinds of



persons. There were the mighty, and the rich, and the proud—elders and priests—wise men and learned, as they deemed, in the word of God. Self-righteous were they, and would not submit to the righteousness of God: and though the name of God was ever on their lips, and the service of God seemed to be their only occupation, yet when God Himself appeared among them, and spake such words, and did such deeds, as never man spake or did, their foolish minds were blinded; nay, in the horrible hardness of their hearts, they mocked Him, and jeered at Him, in the agony which He was enduring for our sakes and theirs, and dared Him to come down from the cross. Where would have been our hope, if He had done as they bade Him? Then there were the Roman soldiers, who had scourged Him, and put on Him the crown of thorns, and driven the nails into His hands and feet, and pierced His side. Little cared they for His meekness and His holiness, for the fame of His miracles, or the beauty of His teaching. They had not God in their thoughts at all, and heeded only their own master, and their own gain, the spoil of Him whom their cruel hands had put to death. And yet He was dying for them, and such as them; and oh, unspeakable goodness! was praying for them, even while they were guilty

of so enormous a sin as raising their hands against God their Creator. Besides these, there was the vast multitude of gazing idlers, who looked on with more or less interest, seeing what was done, and concerned some less and some more about the matter—here and there one who pitied the suffering Galilean—but many who railed on Him, and then turned back into the city, and went on with their usual employments. Only two or three were there who cared for Him, and felt for Him, in that sad hour. There was the centurion, who witnessed that He was truly the Son of God: there was the penitent thief, happier in his shameful death than Pilate in his hall, or Cæsar on his throne: there was John, the beloved disciple: and, lastly, there were the faithful women, whose love overcame their fears—all honour to them! for they showed more love to the Son of God, while He was on earth, than men ever did. Such was the mixed multitude that stood and witnessed the sacrifice of the cross, and looked on at the turning point of their everlasting doom. For if Christ came on earth with salvation in one hand, He had condemnation in the other. If the cross was the savour of life unto life to them which believed, it was death to those who were unbelieving—to the proud Pharisee, and the brutal soldier, and the careless multitude.

And so it is now, and so it shall be to the end of the world. The great sacrifice that was offered on Calvary was not for that generation of men alone : all that came after, all who are born of Adam, are partakers of it, either of the salvation or the condemnation. Do not suppose that the guilt of our blessed Saviour's death rests upon Judas who betrayed Him, or Pilate who condemned Him, or those soldiers who nailed Him to the tree ; for there are Judases and Pilates in every age, and the apostle tells us that we too may crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. All persons who hear of Christ crucified—particularly all who meet on such a day as this, to hear about His death, and to witness and commemorate His sufferings—are acting over again the part of the crowd that went to Calvary on that day on which Christ died. We are either approving and confirming the deed of those wicked men, to our own condemnation ; or we are deploring and lamenting our sins, and laying them at the foot of the cross, and making that our glory which was His shame. It is well worth considering. In the one case, this day is rightly called Good Friday ; for it is the day on which we received the only good that deserves the name : in the other case, it surely is the most evil day in the world's calendar—it is a day of

despair and misery to those who reject the offered mercy of God.

So let us, each of us, ask ourselves fairly and honestly, as in the sight of God, how we come to be here on this day, to look at Christ on the cross? The question will be forced upon us soon, as it has been, long since, on those who were present at Calvary. How come we here? Are we come to mock and jeer at the sufferings of Christ, as the Pharisees did? to shake our heads, and say, If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross: He saved others, Himself He cannot save? Oh no, every one will surely answer: far be that from me. But I tell you that if you are here with the mind of a Pharisee, trusting for salvation to anything except that cross of Christ—especially if you are depending on your own righteousness, your own goodness, acts, or services—you are guilty of that very crime which seems so shocking to you. For you are even now looking on at the sufferings of your Lord and God, and saying that they are needless; that you may get to heaven in your own strength; or, at the most, that His sufferings are only valuable to make up for your deficiencies. You are trusting in a lie, and making a mock at the Passion of your Saviour.

Are you come hither to-day as one of that armed

band, with rude and violent hands to force Him through the gate, and to pierce and nail Him to the cross? You shudder at the thought. But let me tell you that if any one here present is living in any known sin, and does not repent of it, he is crucifying the Son of God—he is smiting Him on the face, and mocking Him, and piercing Him with thorns, and putting Him to an open shame; for the Scripture says so, and the Scripture cannot lie. You come to commemorate the death of Jesus, not as the sacrifice of your salvation, but as the execution of a criminal. I say it solemnly and seriously, that any person, who is conscious of living in unrepented sin, who is a lover of pleasure, or a lover of gain, more than of God, and comes to church on this day, and goes through this day's service, is taking part with those who led Jesus away to be crucified. May God grant to all such, in every part of the world, that they may repent of their great sin, and look on Him whom they have pierced, before it is too late!

In every congregation, that meets together in the name of Christ, there is always a still larger class, corresponding to that idle multitude, who came to see the Lord on the cross, without caring for the sight—out of curiosity, or form, or mere habit. And surely such characters are in a strange and very awful position. That men

who are servants to iniquity should hate the Lord of Righteousness, is intelligible enough. But that men professing to be His disciples should look on and be unmoved, is indeed a terrible evidence of the sin that is in our very nature. And it is much to be feared that some such persons are present in every assembly of professing Christians on this day. There are sure to be those who will come to church, and celebrate the death and passion of Jesus Christ, only because it is the custom, because their fathers have done so before them, or because they have always done so themselves. I would ask such persons, Do you remember, do you fully understand, why you come hither this day? are you thoroughly aware that the events, which we have been reading of this day, are either your salvation or your eternal condemnation? that however indifferent you may feel now about the matter, you cannot prevent these things from being of infinite importance to you? No doubt many spectators at Calvary went home to their business, and satisfied themselves that the death of Christ, whether just or unjust, made no more difference to them, than the death of the two thieves, or any other malefactors. They have found out, long ere this, that they were fatally deceived—that it was every thing to them—and that as they would

not have Him for their Saviour and their dear Lord, as He hung alone and in misery on the cross, they must have Him as their Judge in the awful day.

To those therefore who come to the cross of Christ this day in self-righteousness, in impenitence, or in mere carelessness, I repeat, that they come to their condemnation.

But there are some, to whom that cross is truly life, and health, and peace. They have felt the burden of sin, and the stings of an angry conscience piercing their hearts sharper than the serpent's tooth; and they have looked with an eye of faith on that sacrifice, and perceived the burden fall from their shoulders: and the wounds in their souls are healed, and they see the veil opened for them, and God the Father ready to receive them in the arms of love, for His dear Son's sake. There was John the beloved disciple standing by the cross, who had walked in love with his Master from the first. Happy are all they whom grace has enabled so to walk! And there was His mother, fulfilling now that mysterious prophecy long before spoken of her, that a sword should pierce through her own soul. She scarcely knew her Son yet as a Saviour; but still she hoped and trusted that, in His own good time, He would make His truth to be known and His cause to

triumph. And there was Mary Magdalene, who loved more than they all ; for she loved Him with the love of one to whom much had been forgiven. These, and such as these, are the persons who may well meet together on this day, and think over the glorious deliverance that was wrought for them at Calvary, even while they mourn for the price at which they were redeemed. And some few there are who, like the Thief and the Centurion, have come for very different purposes, but go away, if it please God to touch their hearts, converted, humbled, and renewed.

To all such this day is a day of holy comfort. It is a day when the load of sin feels lighter, when the wounded and contrite spirit is healed and calmed, and when a ray of light, clearer than on other days, is poured into the darkness of the believer's soul. The sacrifice has been offered for us—let us only trust in it : our peace has been made—let us only abide in it. As for our old sins, though the remembrance of them will come back upon us, and weigh heavily at times on our consciences, still let us pray for grace to leave them at the cross : and then, in humble confidence in the merits and the help of our Almighty Saviour, let us walk on in the path which He has marked out for us, looking unto Him, the author and finisher of our faith. And if



we really feel our own sin and our own danger—if we really tremble as we ought at the frown of God's anger, and feel duly grateful for the invaluable deliverance which is offered to us—it will not be on one day only in the year, but every day and every hour, we shall ponder, with thankful hearts and deep humility, over the amazing love of Christ Jesus, and think it not too much to offer to Him our lives, our souls, and our bodies, as a reasonable service.

It may cost us something to tear away our hearts from the objects on which they fix themselves in this life ; it may be, at times, hard to bear the opposition, or the coldness, or the scorn, of this world ; but our strength and consolation is, that the Captain of our salvation has led the way. The servant is not above his Lord. As He was made perfect through suffering, so must we. He careth for us. In all our afflictions He is afflicted, and the angel of His presence is ever at hand to help us when we call upon Him. We cannot ask Him to love us more than He has loved us. Let us only pray and strive—strive and pray every day more earnestly—that we may be enabled more and more to feel and to return that love.

## SERMON XIII.

## THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ACTS ii. 4.—“ They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

THE interval of time that was permitted to pass, between the Ascension of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost, whatever lesson it may have taught the apostles, is clearly full of instruction to us. It is a pause in the great history of salvation, which enables us to view separately the portion that had passed before, and that which came after; to look back to the period of God manifest in the flesh, and then on to the times of the Spirit; and it enables us to see how these periods, and the works accomplished in them, though parts of one perfect design, are yet essentially distinct.

When it pleased God to devise means for the

salvation of men, there were two main objects to be accomplished :—for first, an expiation was to be made to Him for men's sins, in order that His wrath might be appeased and His justice satisfied; and secondly, such a change was to be wrought in the nature of men, as that, being in itself neither fitted nor inclined for a reconciliation with God, such a fitness and such an inclination should be imparted to it. And these two works, being distinct in themselves, and to be effected in different ways, were, in the merciful dispensation of God, undertaken for us by two distinct persons of the Godhead. The first, whereby God is enabled in strict justice to forgive man, and man is justified before God, was the work of the Son, and was finally accomplished when he ascended into heaven; the second, whereby man is enabled to apprehend and to embrace the salvation of God—his enlightenment and sanctification—is the work of the Holy Ghost. This latter work, and the Divine Person on whose blessed agency it depends from first to last, will naturally form the subject of our meditations this morning.

But, before we go further, let me direct your especial attention to this *order* of events in the way of salvation, containing, as it does, a truth of immense practical importance. The work of

Christ in your particular case, whoever you are that desire the salvation of your soul, must go before the work of the Spirit. You must be forgiven before you can be made holy. It is utterly in vain to try to reverse this appointed order of things—to try to make yourself holy with a view to be forgiven and to be reconciled. You must go to Christ first, and accept the benefit of his work, lay your sins on Him, be received, and be forgiven; and *then* you are a fit subject for the operation and influences of His Blessed Spirit.

And now to proceed. I shall not detain you with any inquiry into the *Person* or the *Nature* of God the Holy Ghost, as they are revealed to us in Scripture. I would rather suppose we are all agreed to receive and to believe that which is written of Him, without reserve or question. Not that I would shrink from bringing such a subject before you, as if it were too deep or too mysterious to be presented to the very young—as if it were the exclusive property of the theologian, accessible only to the higher orders of intellect:—I should feel no such hesitation; for I believe that Divine Truth is not measured by human intelligence—that these mysteries, regarding the Nature and Person of God, are infinitely above all comprehension of men, the most acute as well as the simplest, but are within the reach of

a faithful heart wherever it is found—that these things are often hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. No man ever yet made a difficulty of the doctrine of Christ's Nature and Person, who truly desired Him as a Saviour and loved Him as a Saviour; and no man, who feels His want of the Divine Spirit to enlighten and cleanse his heart, will stop to question and to cavil about the doctrine of the Church with regard to Him; he has an inward witness to the truth of the Scripture and the Church, that silences at once every sceptical misgiving on the subject.

Never, therefore, be offended, when you find men of commanding intellect, of acute discrimination, and of undoubted candour, make shipwreck of their faith on such points. They fail when they try to bring the things of God down to the measure of their own stature: they fail, because the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God: and you will invariably find in such men, that their doubts about revealed truth grow strong, just in proportion as their desires after a Saviour and a Sanctifier grow feeble.

With respect then to this Divine Person, we believe in God the Holy Ghost, who has proceeded from the Father and the Son—who has come to dwell with the Church on earth—whose office it is to instruct, to strengthen, and to pu-

rify both Churches and individual Christians. We believe that He is amongst us in this place, according to our Master's promise, not working on us as he did for a time on the apostles at the day of Pentecost, but in such a manner as all the elect of God have ever experienced. Perhaps it may, with God's blessing, be useful to you, if I remind you of one or two particulars in which the help of this ever-present Friend and Guardian is offered to us all — experienced, I hope, by many of us.

I. If you read with any attention the discourses of our blessed Lord to His followers, regarding the Comforter that was to come, you will observe that one principal benefit to be expected from Him was *instruction* in Divine things—"He shall guide you into all truth"—"He shall teach you all things"—"He shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you:"—still, you see, keeping the two works distinct: as if He had said, '*I* am indeed the way, the truth, and the life; but no truth and no life to *you*, until He comes that shall render you capable of receiving it. It is indeed *my* life in the flesh, *my* death, and *my* resurrection, that is to be the salvation of the world; but these things are as yet a dead letter, mere barren facts of no power or meaning, even to you my

chosen followers, until He shall come who shall enable you to appropriate these facts—who shall take of mine and *shall shew it unto you.*'

And, in accordance with this, it is further stated, that none but those who are thus received by Christ, and therefore taught by His Spirit, should ever understand the Truth. "The world cannot receive Him, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Now the teaching by which the children of God on earth are enabled to apprehend Divine Truth, must needs be of a peculiar kind. For the things of sense we have but to train and exercise the faculties which we already possess: but for spiritual things we have no faculties, no capacities; our education must begin with the gift of these. And so our Divine Teacher sets out by implanting in us the capacity of understanding the things of the Spirit. Where this faculty resides, is beautifully and most significantly expressed in the Collect for to-day—"God, who as at this time didst teach the *hearts* of thy faithful people.' And in truth the powers conveyed to us, of apprehending the things of Christ, are eminently those of the heart. The wisdom that is from above is totally unlike that which is called

wisdom among men. The great reasoning powers in the school of Christ are faith and love. He that believes much and loves much, the same knows much. So that this wisdom is within the reach of the humblest and the simplest. Only believe, and the doubts, that vex the minds of the learned and the subtle, shall disappear from before you, as the mist of the morning. Only learn to love God in Christ, and you shall be wiser than the aged. The whole system of redemption, which is incomprehensible to those who stand without, shall gradually expand before your soul in all its perfect proportions. What was complex and mysterious shall become simple; and the clearness of your view into the very mind and counsels of God shall only fall short of that which will come, when you see Him as He is.

II. And while our Divine Instructor is thus helping us to have a right understanding of the things of Christ, He is also ever engaged with our affections, our desires, our wills. Ever since the sin of Adam, our *natural* inclinations lead us away from God. We prefer the visible to the invisible; the things of sense to the things of the Spirit. Therefore, before we are fit to meet the eye of God, there must be a change in our nature—not in our habits merely, or even principles, but in our *nature*—so that it may become *natural* to us to



love what God approves—to find our true pleasure in doing His will. And this is the work which the Holy Ghost must perform in each of you, if you are ever to be fitted for the kingdom of God in heaven. And this is not commonly believed—perhaps there are not many here before me who believe it—I mean though you acquiesce in the statement that has been made regarding the nature and the attributes of the Holy Spirit, you do not practically realize the truth, or apply it to yourselves; and so, you do not believe it. You are indeed persuaded that your nature is corrupt, and that you must become holy before you can appear in the presence of God: but do you feel that *your* nature is *so* corrupt, and God's nature *so* holy, that the constant help and presence of a Divine Person is necessary, in order to effect your sanctification?

Again, you feel that though, for the most part, your inclinations lead you to earthly objects, you have at times suggestions, more or less strong, of a better and higher principle. But do you believe, and acknowledge, that these suggestions are the direct pleadings of the Spirit of God with your spirit? Do you not rather find out any secondary cause instead, and give the credit of such impulses to natural feeling, to the influences of places, or persons, or books, or associations of one

kind or another? I must repeat, that I fear there is little practical faith in the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit among yourselves.

I will not now stop to enlarge on the various other benefits which the Spirit of God brings to that soul, in which He is pleased to take up His abode. It is a subject infinitely wide, infinitely various. But having said so much of His agency as the teacher and purifier of the heart, I desire to make a few remarks, to show how deeply interesting this subject must be to each of you, whether you now feel it to be so, or not.

If the question be put to each of you, ‘Have you received the Holy Ghost? are you conscious of his presence with you, his assistance, his counsel?’ consider in what a solemn position you are placed, whichever way you answer. If, after a glance inwards on your-soul, a hasty review of your tempers, and tastes, and affections, you answer *No*, then you at once cast yourself away from all connexion with Christ, and all interest in Him. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “They (the faithful) were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Think of it again: ‘Have you received the Holy Ghost?’ It is perhaps a question that has never been thrust upon you thus nakedly and

directly before ; and it is one of those questions that men love to put out of sight, and leave unanswered. Do not so now ; but search your hearts, and see if you cannot find there some faint spark of the sacred fire : and pray to this Divine Spirit to come and help you to fan it into a holy and healthy flame.

If, on the other hand, it is given to any one of you to feel, and to acknowledge, the presence and power of the Holy Ghost in his soul—recognising Him by His work and influence ; if you venture to say, I believe that I am a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in me ; then reflect on all that this answer implies. How unspeakably solemn, and yet how sublime and happy, a condition is yours ! Happy you *must* be, in the possession of this earnest of future glory, and of all the delights and blessings that He brings with Him—the power of apprehending and appropriating all the treasures of the love of Christ—the privilege of regarding God as a Father—the sensible growth of high and heavenly affections in your heart—the increasing consolation of that assurance of faith and of hope which is the best anchor of the Christian's heart. Happy you must be, in feeling yourself now within the circle of light and warmth that radiates from the throne of God, to embrace

and cheer his whole family in heaven and earth.

But then how solemn, how awful a thought, that your body, such as it is, is the temple of the Holy Ghost ! If indeed He has taken up His abode with you, He has taught you, by this time, of what you are made—that your tempers, your passions, your desires, are no fit materials to form a dwelling for the most holy God. Think of your ordinary tone of thought, think of the society in which you live, think of the occupation and conversation that is most attractive to you, the stream of life along which you are tempted to float ; and then reflect that, whatever you are engaged upon, with whomsoever you are conversing, you have Him in your company, who as really sees, and hears, and feels, and judges, as Jesus himself, when He walked through the world by the side of his disciples. And let this thought have its due and wholesome effect upon you. Let it encourage you, to think that you have an Almighty Champion at your side : and let it warn you to “work out your salvation”—not lightly or unsteadily, but as one who is under a high and supernatural influence—with fear and trembling ; for there is God dwelling in you, and working in you, to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It is our hope and belief that God the Holy

Ghost has been exerting His most blessed power among you and upon you in a particular manner during the last few weeks. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and when it listeth. There are seasons and periods in which it pleases Him to manifest himself more especially to the souls of men, as on that day of Pentecost, when three thousand felt the first movement within them, and were pricked at the heart. Such a season is this \* to many of you. The waters of the pool have been moved, and many, I would gladly hope, have felt their healing and strengthening virtues. If any of you have been enabled to look in upon your own hearts, and become sensible of your sin in the sight of God—if you have felt within you a yearning after a better nature, a weariness of this body of sin—if any affection of love and gratitude to your Saviour has grown warm in your hearts—if you have felt a pleasure in your prayers and in reading the Scriptures, with a corresponding distaste for the sins, and follies, and mere frivolities of this life—then know and believe that He, the Spirit of Truth and Life and Love, is doing this for you—is stirring your heart—is helping your spirit in its strivings after life. And be of good courage; for if you honestly and reverently cherish this Divine

\* Confirmation.

guest in your soul, you shall have more grace—your way shall be made plain before you; your path shall become a path of peace and pleasantness. You have not now to fight a battle for yourself; you have only to surrender your will and your affections to Him who will fight for you.

And remember, with fear and trembling, that His stay with you depends on your reception of Him. We read in the Scripture that He may be *resisted*, He may be *grieved*, He may be *quenched*—finally driven from the soul by the conflicting power of sin and the flesh. It is to be feared that, here among you, His very entrance into the soul has been resisted by some; that by others, whose hearts have truly felt His power and His suggestions strongly of late, He is being daily grieved, His voice disregarded, and His counsels set at nought, through the love of pleasure or through mere indolence. Let us hope that the influence, which has been called down into your hearts by many warm though secret prayers of your own, with many more sent up on your behalf by those who love you best in this world, may be still alive and still active within: that this day especially may be a day of strengthening and refreshing to many of you, while you feed in faith on the only sustenance for the soul

—the very bread of life ; and while you feel that He is present with us, whose work it is to foster all that is good and spiritual, to make us one with Christ, and, through that union, partakers of all the blessings of the children of God.

## SERMON XIV.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDARD OF MORALITY.

MATT. v. 47.—“ If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ?”

THESE words were addressed by the Lord to His disciples ; and they imply, what had been expressly said in the same discourse, that, if they were his disciples in truth, and not in name only, their morality must be altogether of another order than the morality of the unbelieving world in which they were to move and act. Their faith in Him, as we learn from the opening of the discourse, must be a fruitful faith, or it would be of no avail in the sight of God ; for His blessing is upon certain characters, and tempers, and habits, and actions. Besides, they were the light of the world, set in the world for that very purpose, that



by their good works they might give occasion to men to glorify their Father in heaven; and therefore their righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees: for these observed only the letter of the Law; the disciple of Christ must obey it in the depth, and breadth, and fullness, of the spirit. Nay, if they should be contented with the principles and measures of morality current in the world, they might find themselves no further advanced than the publicans, whose natural affections taught them to love those who loved them, and to salute their brethren. "If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"

Now the only ground on which this assumption could stand, viz. that His disciples must *exceed* others in righteousness, must do *more* than others, is the fact that they *were* His disciples;—following Him, learning of Him, imitating Him, desiring to serve Him in His kingdom, and having, by consequence, stronger motives, nobler aims, and higher thoughts, than other men. They had given up the world, with all its objects and pursuits, and had devoted themselves to Him, believing Him to be the Christ, the Son of God, sent to redeem and restore His chosen people; and however indistinct were their conceptions of His kingdom, this at least was plain to them, that

to be His meanest servant was a nobler office than to sit with the princes of the earth. And they could not have passed days, and weeks, as they had done, in His company, without feeling that He required in His servants a character elevated far above the ordinary moral stature of mankind. And so they would understand the appeal to their peculiar position as involving peculiar requirements, when their master said, "If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye *more* than others?"

Now let us at once transfer to ourselves these words of Christ. His words never pass away, but will retain life, and vigour, and meaning, as long as that Church shall last, of which the little flock that gathered round Him on the Mount was the germ and the model. It is true that then the comparison lay between professing believers in Christ, and avowed infidels: now we all profess to believe. As far as profession goes, we all have the same hopes and fears, motives and principles; and our Lord may expect the same degree of righteousness from all. But unhappily this is only in profession. Practically the case is nearly the same now as then. The friends of Christ are the few; the servants of Satan and the world and their own lusts, are the many.

Amongst us at this moment there are some

whose consciences bear them witness that in their hearts and lives they are disciples of Christ; following Him, learning of Him, desiring to be like Him, and with Him. And there are others whose hearts tell them that they are not following Him, nor even desiring to follow Him; but simply pleasing themselves, and walking after their own foolish imaginations.

And though both these characters weekly and daily *profess* the same feelings with regard to Christ in our common prayers, namely, love to Him, faith in Him, earnest desires to please Him and to partake of His promises, the one class of characters *feel* what they profess, the other do not feel it.

To distinguish between these classes and to pronounce on individual characters, is not the business of any man. Your consciences must be your witnesses; and to your consciences I must appeal, as St. Paul ever did, to pronounce for you this at least, whether you feel what you profess, whether you realize your position as disciples of Christ.

Because the lesson of my text is for such, to you I may say, with a sure confidence of my being understood, that you must *do more than others*.

And the grounds on which this obligation rests are the same in your case as in that of His disci-

ples of old ;—because you are His disciples—because you know and understand and feel your position—all that has been done for you—what you are now, and what you are to be one day—what you might have been but for the love of Christ; and further, because you know what His mind and Spirit is, and know that He would have you become like Himself in all things. And this lesson is brought to us the more seasonably at the present time, so soon after the completion of that yearly course of teaching by which we in this Church are taught and reminded, again and again, of all that has been done for us. So that it is scarcely necessary to prove that our *obligations* are great and extraordinary, because we have all so lately acknowledged in common that our *position* is wonderful and extraordinary. Every believer here has, in the course of the last few months, set his seal to the truth of works done for him, compared with which the creation of the world at the first was a simple and an easy task. Each of you is in possession of a scheme of salvation devised by the mind of God from the days of the fall, and kept in view through all His dispensations, so that Kings stood or fell, Nations were raised up or cast down, with a view to it. And when the fulness of time was come, then God was made man : the heavenly mansions

of the Father were for awhile deprived of the presence of the First-born : and then began the conflict with the Prince of the Power of the Air, fought and won by the arm of Christ alone, through shame and suffering, humiliation and death. If there is any truth in Christianity, it is true that all the powers of the invisible world, evil and good, were then arrayed against each other, to fight a battle for the souls of such as we are who sit here this day.

This is only what we profess when we commemorate the incarnation of the Son of God, His fasting and temptation, His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His death and descent into Hell, His resurrection and ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. If you consider the whole of this history, you must see that all is mysterious, all stupendous, all extraordinary ; that every thing that has been done for you has been effected in violation of the ordinary laws of nature, by the love of the Father, the efforts and agony of the Son, the strivings and groanings of the Spirit : and then, you who know and feel all this, ask yourselves, ‘ Are we to be no way discernible in character and conduct from those who feel it not ? are we to be always common-place and ordinary in our doings, when all around us is so strange and supernatural ?

are we to be contenting ourselves with the maxims and standard of the world, when the angels of heaven, when God Himself, has moved aside out of His way in our behalf?

Those of you who have this day, at the Supper of the Lord, offered your souls and bodies as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice to God, in gratitude to Him who not only died for you, but has also given His body and blood to be meat and drink for your souls, will readily acknowledge that you are bound to do more for God than they who scarcely know, certainly do not feel, that Christ has done anything for them at all,—who are conscious of no danger escaped, no absorbing interests at stake, no struggle for eternal life or death going on within them.

This is a practical matter, a thought that must put us all to shame, and those most who are most conscious of the love with which Christ has loved them. If we look to what we have done or are doing for Christ in the world—still more to what we do on His side within ourselves, in watching and purifying our hearts, elevating our desires, regulating our thoughts, controlling our tempers,—we must admit that we are aiming too low—that we are too soon satisfied—pleased to compare ourselves with our neighbours, and find ourselves better than some, as good as many; for-

getting that, to make the comparison fair, we should compare motives too: and then, what should we gain by the contrast but shame and confusion?—finding that we, who profess to be under infinite obligations, to be fleeing from eternal death, to be candidates for eternal glory, are scarcely to be distinguished from many, whose highest motives are natural instincts, the dread of public opinion, and the desire of earthly prosperity.

And it is all owing to that fear of man which bringeth a snare. The world, which will bear with a certain degree of Christian practice, will admire Christian virtues, and see the advantages of Christian influences, will not endure anything like enthusiasm in the cause of the cross. Not that our generation objects to enthusiasm in itself. It is still, as ever, applauded and admired. It is still the sure path to distinction, when it is exerted to serve the interests of this life. It is by steadily pursuing one object to the exclusion of all others—toiling after this, without regarding discouragements, interruptions, or censures—that men succeed, and become famous in their generation. The world admires such men, and pronounces them great: but the first appearance of zeal for Christ is checked and discouraged, as if the rule was—Ye that serve the world, or yourselves, or mankind, do it with all your hearts; but ye

who serve God, see that ye do it with *moderation*.

This is the tone and temper you will meet with in society at large. But if you will hear the will of God, and be as He would have you to be, you must make up your minds to measure yourselves by a higher standard. "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "I beseech you by the mercies of God"—(the great motive)—"that ye present your bodies unto Him a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service,"—reasonable and natural in you, though it would be unreasonable and unnatural in others.

Remember that if your souls are to be made fit for heaven at all, they must be made so here, through the work of the Spirit, aided by your own endeavours. This is the will of God concerning you, that you should here be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Therefore set your mark high enough. You see the apostle is not afraid to exhort sinful feeble men, with like passions and like temptations as ourselves, to cultivate the same mind that was in the Lord Jesus Himself. The Lord Himself bids us be perfect as our Father in heaven.

Nor must we understand this as contradicting what is elsewhere said in Scripture of the infirmity and corruption of man's nature, as if it were



in mockery that God told us, who are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, that we must be perfect like Himself. The teaching of Scripture is true in all its length and breadth, in spite of seeming contradictions; and, in the case before us, the invitation to absolute holiness is in perfect harmony with the truth of our natural corruption.

For, in considering what man is, fallen by nature, we are not to forget what he once was, before the fall; nor what he is to be, when God's purposes are fulfilled in him:—by nature unable to do anything that shall please God; yet having in him capacity for a life and a character above the angels. “Of my own self I can do nothing,” is a practical truth, at the foundation of all truth: but “I can do all things through Christ strengthening me,” is, as it were, the crown and capital of the Christian character.

But this is often forgotten; and many a sincere believer has been in peril, by looking at only one side of man's nature—by pushing out of its place this doctrine of natural corruption, and using it as an excuse for indolence and mediocrity. Begin with the clearest conviction of your own sinfulness and utter helplessness by nature: but, as you go on in your course, learn that, by the help of God's grace, so far from being weak and grovelling and incapable, there is no height or degree

of holiness that you may not attain, until you reach the throne of your Father in heaven. I hope that those among you who profess to realize your position as children of God, translated into His kingdom, and heirs of eternal life, are now willing to admit, as you look back on what you have been doing to His glory, that far more might have been expected of you, and is expected of you, and that you are capable of doing far more, if you have the will. Then it only remains that we should exhort you, that we should all exhort one another, to be doing more than we have done. For we are all in fault. We all have to answer, not only for our own short coming, but for the general deficiency of the Christian community in which we live. We act upon one another with a most unhappy kind of depressing influence. The atmosphere we live in is impregnated with it; so that if God should put it into the heart of any one of us to take a step out of the beaten track for Christ's sake, he straightway begins to think what this or that person will say of him: and the fear of appearing singular, and desirous to be better than his neighbours, has chilled and checked many a healthy promise of zeal and fervour in the Lord's service. I would not speak to you in this manner, if I thought there was anything to be apprehended by the Church from an

excess of zeal in these days. As I told you before, there is zeal enough, and more than enough, abroad in the world, but none to spare in Christ's service.

Therefore I repeat, such of you as intend, by God's grace, to *live* to Him, must set your mark high enough. I not say that you may not, with profit, set this or that character before you as a model; but I do say that you must not rest contented with any model short of Christ himself; and I have no hesitation in adding that no Christian character among *men* ever existed, which any one of you may not reach, or even surpass, with God's grace to assist your own prayers and endeavours.

But (if such is your purpose) you must not expect to please the *world*—you must be prepared to meet with discouragement of every kind. That which is genuine love of Christ will be sneered at as hypocrisy and love of notoriety. But arm yourselves with the words of my text. Let them come into your minds, as you examine yourselves, and open your hearts to your Lord and Master, night and morning; and think that He is continually asking you the question, "What do ye more than others?" Then, if that flimsy sophistry of Satan should be presented to you in the shape of a very common inquiry, 'Can you not be con-

tented to be as your neighbours, your forefathers, the world around you ?' I hope your answer will be ready, ' My Lord looks for perfection in me : I am *not* contented with any holiness short of perfect holiness : I *do* desire to be more righteous than any man : I hunger and thirst after righteousness.'

Let this mind be in you which was in the apostles of the Lord, who set before their eyes the prize of their high calling, and marched on towards it without shrinking or wavering. Our temptation is to be too deliberate, too cautious ; feeling our way between this error and that, with our eyes on the ground to see where we place our feet, or turned to see how the world is regarding us ; and so, in our excessive fear of enthusiasm, taking up, and being contented with, a tame and miserable and insipid mediocrity.

I must observe in conclusion, that, when I press upon you this evident requirement of our Lord, that His disciples should do more than others, I do not mean to exhort any of you to that sort of activity which must of necessity draw you out of the position and the circumstances in which God has placed you. For His service does not consist solely or even principally in any outward actions, but mainly in the heart and the affections. If any of you therefore are filled with a genuine desire to show your love to Christ by doing His

will, I would have you begin upon your own hearts, cultivating all those tempers and dispositions which shall make you like your Father which is in heaven. No need to step out of your place, and to draw upon you prematurely the eyes of the world; but try first to be distinguished by *humility*, and charity, and purity, and forbearance, and a heavenly mind. It is true you cannot even do this without incurring the displeasure of mere worldly men—for the habits of a disciple are altogether distasteful to such persons. Your acts of self-denial, your careful choice of society and conversation and books, will be to them affectation or censoriousness. Still, I say, remember that God requires something more of you than of others. So cultivate a sober, chaste, and spiritual mind; and for any more decided occasion of showing your love and your zeal, wait your time. If your service is wanted, you will be called for, and you will be ready. You will leave all to follow Christ; and spare nothing, if, by the sacrifice of your lives and fortunes, you may do something more than others for His sake.

## SERMON XV.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S MARK.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 14.—“ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

It is scarcely necessary to refer to the history of St. Paul to show that he could, in all sincerity, say this of himself. From the day of his appointment to be an apostle of the Lord, he had set up his mark before his eyes; in full and clear apprehension of the object he was aiming at; in perfect confidence that it was to be attained; and with such a stream of desires, affections, and hopes, all flowing towards it, as carried him on, with ever increasing vigour and steadfastness, to the very end. And he so felt that this was the only right and safe frame for the Christian in this life, that he repeatedly urged it on his peo-

ple ; being able, most happily, to enforce his persuasions by the bright example of His own life and character. The language he uses about himself is very strong. Unhappily we become so familiar with the strong expressions of Scripture, that they are apt, unless we are very careful, to lose their effect upon our minds. Only remember how often he uses this very figure of the runner in the race ; with every nerve and every muscle strained to the utmost ; his eyes fixed upon the crown, his hand stretched to grasp it ; forgetting all that is behind, heedless of the dust and the toil and the heat ; having but one object in view, and that one occupying all his desires, and calling out all his strength. Such, under a figure, was the spiritual state and posture of St. Paul himself : such he would have all to be who profess the same faith and are called by the same name with himself.

I shall not stay to show that this was truly the character of the apostle ; but I will endeavour to make the words of the text an occasion for self-examination, praying that the good Spirit of God may apply them to our hearts in the way of encouragement, or exhortation, or reproof, as we may severally require.

It seems that, if we are ever to meet with success *as Christians*, we must begin by setting up

for ourselves, *as Christians*, an object ; and this, not as subordinate to our other purposes, or even as one among the crowd of objects which we have in view in this life, but as one that shall stand out to our eyes far above every other, that shall so commend itself to our consciences, and so assert its actual and infinite superiority, as that all other ends, objects, and purposes of life shall become its servants and its instruments. It will be necessary that this object shall occupy full possession of our affections, so that in truth and reality it shall be the dearest wish of our hearts to obtain it, and the moment of possessing it shall appear to us the crown and consummation of our happiness. And further, as we must have it clearly before our eyes, and set our affections stedfastly on it, so we must be able *to see our way to it*. We must feel sure it may be had—that we may have it—that the means and instruments of attaining it are within our reach.

When this is truly the case with us, we shall not need much persuasion to be diligent and earnest. We shall have that within us which will drive us onward, and that before us which will draw us onward with a sweet and irresistible influence. And our course, as Christians, will then be stedfast and constant. There will be no wavering, no loitering, no trifling: but we shall present to the



world the appearance of those who are doing all things with a settled view, on certain principles ; and even they who cannot understand our motives, who do not see our mark, will respect the vigour and consistency with which we pursue it.

Is it not even so in things which concern this life only ? Can we not trace the broad line of distinction that separates those who have *an object* in their lives, from those who have none ? I suppose we could not better describe an unhappy, unsatisfactory life, than by saying that the man was living without an object—that, if he had energies, and talents, and affections, they were all asleep, for he had no scope or mark for them to aim at. There is a sort of stagnancy in all such characters that makes them a burden to themselves, and a wonder to the active busy world around them. Scarcely less unhappy are those, who feel indeed that they must have *something* in view, who cannot exist without some occupation, and yet, for want of a fixed end and aim of their lives, are perpetually turning from this object to that, pursuing one trifle for a little season, and then leaving it for a newer and more attractive employment. The total inactivity of the one character, and the fitful desultory energy of the other, leads to the same poor result—there is no real progress made—no work done in the end by

either. No, as we all know, the man who succeeds in the world, who does his work well, who is respectable and respected, is he who sets out on his course in life with a well defined purpose and aim—with his object before him, however distant—who, in the whole conduct of his life, keeps this in sight, and shapes every day's work with a view to it. He knows that he must take many steps before he reaches the height of his desires—that many means must be employed—many lesser ends must be gained—before he can reach that great end of all ; but he toils on in patience and hope. Such a character, I say, is sure to win the admiration of those who see him : because, even if they cannot perceive the mark that he has set up before him, they cannot but see the patience and the perseverance, the constancy and the steadfastness, with which he holds on his course. It is the *one fixed object* that makes the difference—that gives this consistency and this dignity to the man's whole character—that will extort our admiration, sometimes even when the object for which he toils is a bad one.

And I fear that such characters are more common in the world than in the church ; that the children of this world are, in the main, more vigorous and more persevering in their generation, as well as wiser, than the children of light

Where we meet with one man who is pressing towards St. Paul's mark, with all his energy, after St. Paul's own manner, we see a hundred hurrying after their own objects, forgetting those things which are behind, too busy to look to the right hand or the left, fairly abstracted and carried away by the absorbing interests of their ruling desire.

There are many here who believe themselves to be living members of God's spiritual family; who, in their private communion with God, address Him as their Father; feel that they are His children by faith in the Lord Jesus; and while they appropriate to themselves all the blessed promises of God in Christ, feel bound also to discharge all the duties of a new and spiritual life. Let me press this subject on your consideration. Perhaps you may thus learn how your course may become more consistent, your progress more steadfast and certain, than it has hitherto been.

And first, let me urge upon you the necessity of having one fixed object before you as Christians; and let it be well defined, clearly conceived in your minds. No doubt the ultimate purpose and aim of every Christian must be substantially the same: but yet, from the want of this clear conception of it, much confusion of thought, and much unsteadiness of conduct, is apt to arise in

particular cases. Therefore settle this matter well in your mind—understand what is the end of your Christian course—get a clear sight of the mark at which you aim, and maintain it. This will keep you straight, not merely in the general course of your life—in the long run, as one may say—but it will regulate for you the actions and the conduct of every day. Each day may be made a step towards the great end, if you settle in your mind once for all, what that great end is.

We find the object of the Christian course variously spoken of in Scripture. In the passage before us, no doubt St. Paul had in his mind the prize of his high calling, the salvation of his own soul, and the everlasting enjoyment of the Person and the love of Christ. In the same spirit he exhorts his people to make sure of their *own* crown, to work out their *own* salvation; and he tells them that the will of God concerning them—redeemed as they were from the dominion of sin—was their sanctification. Elsewhere, however, we learn, and nowhere more clearly than in the history of St. Paul himself, that the object of every Christian should be the edification of the church—the salvation of *other* men's souls. Both these are included under the one great end and object of all the Christian's hopes and prayers and labours, the glory of God in

Christ Jesus. So the object of your lives as Christians ought to be, the glory of God in the salvation of your own souls and in the edification of your neighbours.

Now if every one of you would set up this simple mark before you—not as a dim and distant object, more than half hidden in the crowd of each day's engagements; but standing out clearly and fully above them all, and indeed including all the rest—if this were made your first and dearest object when you rise in the morning, and the test of all your day's work when you lie down at night—would it not give a consistency and unity to your conduct, a dignity and a grace to your character, such as no other circumstance can? You would then know, when you kneel down to pray, what you have to pray for—when you go out into the world, what you have to work for. There would be new distinctness in your prayers, and new vigour in your labours. Each day's work would fall into the plan, and add a stone or two to the beautiful building which you have already designed in your soul. Stone by stone the building must be raised; and yet the plan as a whole must be always before you, and every stone laid with a view to it. The glory of God in your own salvation first of all, you will say is your object: then you will look about to see

what you can do to accomplish this end, and you will find that every day will bring its own employment in this work. Your sanctification must be a gradual process. Many a temptation is to be overcome—many a bosom sin to be plucked out and cast away—many a Christian grace to be cultivated and fostered in you:—and each several work requiring patience, and perseverance, and prayer, and watchfulness. But yet you feel that each is a step to the attainment of the great end—a part of the whole plan. Small and slow as your progress is, you feel that you are advancing—that you are ever drawing nearer to your mark.

Again, the glory of God in the edification of your neighbours. Let this be clearly understood and felt as a part of the great work of your lives, and you will find it a certain rule for your guidance in every day's conduct. Whether you are at work or at leisure, in the quiet walk or friendly conversation, you will have the comfort of knowing well what your object is; and your neighbours will soon find out, that there is something not of this world that gives a character and colour to your conduct. While some, who profess to be going the same road, are in fact standing still for want of an object; and others, from mere restlessness, are always shifting their

course, fluttering this way and that way, like the unbalanced and changeful flight of the butterfly, all good men will watch your progress with admiration, because they will see that you are pressing towards your mark both swiftly and surely.

But it will not be enough to understand well what your object is, unless you desire above all things to attain it. You *cannot* indeed pursue your course evenly, unless you have your mark well in view : but, even then, you *will* not pursue it, unless your heart is set on reaching it. And this view of the subject requires perhaps more attention than the former. It is not so hard, considering the means of instruction that you have, to understand what should be the proper end of all your doings : the difficulty is so to control and direct and manage your affections, as that they shall point to that, and to that only. Here again the language of St. Paul is very strong. He counts all things, all the best things, as loss, that he may win Christ. It was the great stake of his life. In the hope of it he had sacrificed every thing—he had resolutely torn away his desires and affections from the objects on which they had been fastened before—he had bound them up in the one object—and towards that his heart was drawn by the united influence of them all.

Here it is that you find a great difficulty: there are so many things about you in the world that invite your attention, that engage your interest—things that are small indeed and poor, as you readily admit, compared with the one thing needful; but yet they are very near to you, and very inviting; and they are too successful in drawing you aside, in making you linger in your course. You turn your eyes aside for a moment, and lose sight of your mark; and then you find it not so easy to regain that full sight of it, that strong desire after it, which you had enjoyed before. If ever you take a review of your doings for a week or a month past, and are forced to confess that there has been a want of steadiness and warmth—a want of *progress* and vigour in your course—it has been from this cause, that your affections and desires were not fixed with sufficient stedfastness on the one great object.

But how is this to be remedied? how are our feelings and desires, so wayward and so perverse as they are—how are they to be reclaimed from worthless things, and fastened, as St. Paul's were, on the one grand object? This is pre-eminently the work of grace, the office of the Holy Spirit of love. But yet, even in this, we must be fellow-workers with Him: He will not do it for us, unless we exert ourselves in concert with Him.



Abundance of grace is only to be attained by the diligent use of the means of grace. If you would enjoy the spirit of St. Paul, you must use the means that he used. You must keep your heart with all diligence. You must watch its movements and its inclinations, and check it when it wanders from its proper object. And you must be instant in prayer, that the Spirit of love may be granted to you ; to kindle in you all holy desires and affections ; to take of the things of Christ, and show them to you in all their real beauty and perfection ; to make the glory of God, and the love of Christ, infinitely more amiable and pleasant to your soul than every other object. When this is your state, your way in life will be a way of pleasantness ; your desires and your inclinations will be your best guides. It will be no longer necessary then to stir you up with reasonings and remonstrances and reproofs to works of piety and charity ; for they will be the only pleasures of your life. It will be needless then to exhort you to look with submission and patience to the hour of death ; for that will be the point to which your desires and your hopes are all directed.

And once more—that you may go on your course with the earnestness of St. Paul, you must have the *faith* of St. Paul. You must believe

without doubt that the glory of God in your salvation shall surely be accomplished—believe that the work of grace in your souls is His work—the work that He has taken into His own hands—on which He has bestowed the all-powerful energies of the Godhead. And do not think that this act of faith—this persuasion that your salvation is the work of God—will of necessity render your own efforts unnecessary, or lead you into carelessness and indolence. On some, no doubt, it is permitted to have this effect; and the free grace of God is to them a deadly snare. But that it need not be so, we may learn from another view of the character of St. Paul. Never man was more thoroughly persuaded that eternal life was the gift of God—that the election and the calling, the justifying and the sanctifying of his soul, was the work of God: and yet surely never man set himself to work out his own salvation with more diligence—with a clearer conviction that, unless he faithfully did his part of the work, all this grace might be in vain, and he become a castaway.

Therefore apprehend well what the aim of your life is, in the full assurance of understanding; and learn to fix your affections on that, to love it and long for it, in the full assurance of hope; and believe, in the full assurance of faith,

that, through God's mercy in Christ, and by the help of His blessed Spirit, you shall attain it: and then your course will be straight, and bright, and consistent. No mists of false philosophy will shut out the mark from your view. No false attractions will divert your heart from it. No suggestions of the devil will make you despair of winning it. We all of us need admonition and exhortation in this matter. Who is there here that will not admit, that he has not kept the great prize so distinctly in view, that he has not so earnestly desired and longed for it, that he has not so confidently looked for the possession of it, as he might have done, and ought to have done? If God should give any one of you grace to be like-minded with St. Paul in this matter—like him to set your heart on the prize, and like him to strive after it—we should soon take notice of your ways, and acknowledge the Spirit that worked in you. The world might think you enthusiastic, might call you mad, as Festus called Paul mad; but the world is not to be regarded. They who cannot see the mark for which you run may well wonder that you press on so eagerly.

But, in truth, there is no reason why any one in this place should be *singular* in this respect. Are there not enough here to bear one another out in such holy diligence? Shall we not rather

provoke one another to renewed haste and vigour in our spiritual race? Shall we not, like rivals, and yet like brothers, all together forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those which are before; and so together press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?

## SERMON XVI.

## TEMPTATION.

JAMES i. 14.—“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

THE subject of *temptation* is especially brought under our notice at this season of the Christian year. The services of last Sunday tell us of two temptations—the Son of man tempted of the devil—and Abraham tempted of God. Of the latter temptation I am not now going to speak. It is almost needless to remind you that it was essentially different in character from the former; proceeding from love, not from hatred, intended to prove and establish Abraham, not to lead him into sin—as a tender parent will place her child on the ground to make trial of its strength, while the arms of love are still outstretched to save it from a fall. God had

long known the faith and love of Abraham ; but as if to show us that the only profession of faith that He will accept is obedience to His commandments, He called for the sacrifice of Isaac : and when the call was answered by obedience, He could say—“ *Now I know that thou fearest me.*”

I wish to invite your attention to that temptation, the work of our great adversary the devil, to which we are all exposed, and of which we have so signal an example in the history of our Lord's conflict with him in the wilderness. This history seems to have been given us, not only for our encouragement, showing, as it does, that Satan's power over mankind has been broken ever since he found *a man* without sin ; but also for our instruction, that we may learn how our temptation takes place, and how it may best be supported. I say we are all of us exposed to this trial as long as we live ; and the more sincerely we are set upon walking in the narrow and steep way, the more conscious we must be of temptation. If indeed you are swimming with the stream, following the multitude along the smooth road of self-indulgence, you cannot know the power of temptation ; for you have never measured your strength against it, you have not yet set your face the right way, or taken pains to be

as God would have you to be. But if the Spirit of God, from whom come all good desires, has put into your hearts a desire after holiness and life, then I am sure your own experience must tell you, even the youngest of you, that your whole life is already a temptation and a trial—is it not?—often too great for your strength.

You know also the infinite importance of the issue, stated, as it is, so shortly and so strongly by St. James, when he writes on the one hand, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him :” and on the other, “Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Hear me, then, while I endeavour shortly to turn your thoughts in upon your own hearts : so that, while I show you how temptation in general takes place, I may, with God’s blessing, help you to find out what your peculiar trials are, and how they may best be sustained. It is commonly considered and taught that there are three principal sources of moral evil—the devil, the world, and the flesh ; and that all sin, and all temptation, may be traced up to one or other of these polluted springs. And some have gone so far as to classify and arrange the sins of mankind, stating

from which of these sources each proceeds. But this, I think, is not the true way of regarding the matter : for, from all that Scripture and experience and reason together teach, it may be concluded that no temptation takes place without the agency of all.

I. All moral evil comes to us directly from the Spirit of Evil, the Adversary, the Tempter, the Accuser—a real Person—as real in his unhappy personality as each Blessed Person in the ever-blessed Trinity—an envious, proud, malicious Spirit—not, as the Sadducees of the present day will tell you, a mere abstraction, a personification of the evil principle ; but a living, willing, acting Spirit. And no evil has ever taken place in this world, since evil first came into the world, of which he has not been the author. He was at Cain's right hand when he slew his brother Abel—in the world before the flood—in the streets of Sodom—the land of Egypt—the tents of Moab. Wherever sin, and cruelty, and uncleanness, in act, or speech, or thought, is going on, there is our adversary, always watchful, always active, and always for mischief.

His *immediate* agency on our hearts is most terrible and strange. I suppose it is employed in different degrees against different persons ; but I feel sure that all men of reflection can bear wit-



ness to the singular manner in which evil thoughts are suggested to the mind; not merely without introduction or association, but even intruding upon a frame and posture of mind entirely, one would think, at variance with them.

But these are not common temptations. Ordinarily we can trace the evil, and see whence it comes; and it's a sad thing to confess, that Satan commonly finds the agents and ministers of his temptations, his own representatives, among ourselves. Some men indeed seem so devoted to his service, that, having already sold *themselves* to him, they put forth all their diligence to bring others into the same bondage. These are frightful characters. I only allude to them by way of warning. They were not born such; they have become such: and probably there was a time when they would have been as much shocked as you are at such a character. But remember, every one who is instrumental in leading another into sin is so far serving, nay representing the Evil Spirit. And in how many ways is this done even amongst us! Consider, an idle word, a profane jest, a bad book, may leave an impression of evil that shall never be erased, and cause one of your brethren to go astray. Human nature has no aspect more hateful to God and to good men, than when one leads his brother into sin.

So then, either immediately, or through the agency of man, Satan is the author of all temptation.

II. And he finds the means and instruments of temptation in the world. He could not, stranger as he is, entice us from the side of our heavenly Father, without some object to hold out to us; he could not strike down, as he has done, the choice servants of God, without some weapon in his hand. No temptation takes place without some object to allure, or some weapon to terrify. Even in those cases when evil thoughts arise in the mind, at times in which every outward object of sense is shut out, it is still the recollection of something desired or feared that hurries men into unpermitted fancies, or unholy doubts and fears. Commonly, however, the instruments of temptations are open and palpable. The desire of some pleasure, the fear of some evil, real or imaginary is what constitutes your trial. Temptations are of infinite variety, selected and applied by your enemy with supernatural skill. He tried Job with sorrow—Solomon with wealth and prosperity—Judas with the love of money—Peter with the fear of men. Learn from this, not to think yourselves safe because you have stood firm against one kind of trial, for there are others to come. Perhaps hatred, and contempt, and ridi-

cule, may not have moved you from serving the Lord : then look to it that the smiles of the world, ever more dangerous than its scowl, do not persuade you to cast away your armour, and so fall a prey to the Evil One.

III. But further, as Satan himself could not assail us without the world, which is his armoury, so, even with the world on his side, he could do us no hurt without the aid of the flesh—if it were not for our own corrupt hearts. This is the lamentable truth—the flesh is on his side. For those things which we call temptations would have no power to make us sin, if we had not some unholy desires after them within ourselves. But for our own thoughts and wishes, they would be no temptations at all. As a blind man can find no pleasure in the brightest flower, or the most gorgeous sky ; and as the spirit of a deaf man is deprived of the pleasures of music ; so sin would have no attractions for us, if we had capacities for it, and desires after it, in our own hearts.

If our hearts were sound within us, and free from the taint of sin, we might walk in the midst of the most enticing temptations, and yet stand upright and pure, as the three children walked in the burning furnace, and not a hair of their head was singed. Has this ever been so ? has

there ever been one among the sons of men who had no sin within him, and against whom therefore the solicitations of the devil had no power to make him sin? It was so with the Great Son of man, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,—and without sin simply because the outward objects set before Him, to lead Him into sin, found no corresponding taint within. Hungry and faint, as He was after His forty days' fast, He loved the Word of His Father more than bread, or even life itself. Poor and desolate in the vast wilderness, He chose rather to be so, with the favour of His heavenly Father, than to have all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. Despised as He was, He would not put forth His Divine power at the bidding of Satan, but waited patiently till the time appointed of God.

So then it is the sin that dwells in us that makes temptations, and not only the Tempter and the world. And St. James rightly tells us to lay the fault mainly on our own lusts, because over them we have a certain control; whereas we can have none over the Tempter, or the circumstances in which we are placed by the Providence of God.

Let us now see whether, from this view of our case with regard to temptation, we cannot learn some lessons that may be useful to us in practice.

The first thing to be observed is, that each of

us must have his own peculiar trial. Though it is simply true, as St. Paul says, that no temptation hath taken us but such as is common to men—that all are equally exposed to it, and in equal degrees in the main—(for it is the purpose of God that all of us should be thoroughly sifted)—still we may safely say that, since the world began, no two persons have been exposed to precisely *the same* temptation. Every one is tempted when he is drawn away of *his own* lust.\* For as temptation depends upon both the character and the circumstances of each person, it must vary according to the infinitely various modifications of characters and combinations of circumstances. Reflect therefore, each of you, that, since the beginning of the world, no one has been tried precisely in the same way as yourself. The eye of God is upon you singly ; and singly you will have to answer, when you are called to account at the last day.

There are broad distinctions of age, station, tempers, and education, in which this is very apparent. That which is a strong temptation to one of you, may be none at all to me ; while you may be secure from a trial, to which I am exposed every day and every hour. And even in cases when a casual observer would see no distinction,

\* τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας.

either in circumstances or in character, there are as great differences in the sight of God, as there are in figure and feature to our own eyes.

We may learn from this to be fair and just in comparing ourselves with others, as to the magnitude of our sins. We are all of us apt to *feel* with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee That I am not as other men are." When we hear of men committing sin in any gross and brutal and offensive shape, a feeling of self-complacency rises in us, as we contrast our own conduct with theirs; and we express pity or contempt or disgust at them, according to our several dispositions. But what a poor triumph, what a false security, is this! We never consider, that we have no temptations at all to commit such sins; that our circumstances, condition in life, education, almost entirely secure us from them; at least, that it would argue a profligacy almost unnatural in us to be guilty of them. You have each *your own* temptations: look to them. If you are not tempted to steal, then thank God, who has given you abundance; and be merciful in your thoughts to your poor and hungry and untaught brother, who is daily exposed to such gross temptations.

On the other hand, we must beware of saying, when we are tempted, that we are tempted of God. This is very commonly *felt*, if not said: at least

sinner very commonly excuse themselves on the ground of the circumstances in which they were placed, involving, they say, so strong an inducement to sin that they could not withstand it. This is a false excuse—as false in principle as that of Eve: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” If your heart is in a right state before God, you may come safely out of any trial that He will permit to be laid upon you.

But the consideration of this subject will be more useful to you, if it leads you to search and ascertain thoroughly what is your peculiar temptation. You will not be fit to go out into the world, under the eye of God, until you have learned this. A knowledge of your own character, especially of its weak points, is the most necessary of all knowledge. And I do not mean to say that it is easy to acquire this. Unfortunately, few of us know where we are weak, until we have had a fall. The Tempter may not yet have assailed you in your weakest point; indeed it is probable he has not: most of you have not yet arrived at the hottest part of the conflict, when ‘fierce temptation, seconded within by traitor appetite,’ makes determined and repeated attacks upon the soul. Then, before you come to that time of life and that position in which you are likely to be exposed to danger, you should examine your own

heart, and see where you are weak. And be sure you are not over confident in any point; for where you feel most secure, there you are often assailed most successfully. Who would have thought that Simon Peter would have failed in the love of His Master? He seems to have scorned the notion that he could sin in that point, it had been so tried before, and his heart could honestly assure him that his love was genuine and unfeigned. And so he slept while he should have been praying and preparing, and you know the result. And doubtless many of you have had indications, clear enough to those who will consider, in which direction your trial will lie. Whether it is to be some form or other of the lusts of the flesh, or the pride of life, or indolence, or love of the world, or ambition and the desire of honour among men, see to it: for as surely as you go out into the world, you will be assailed, in your weakest point, with the full power of your enemy.

Yet little will be gained by merely knowing your weak points unless you take the right way of guarding them against temptation. There is but one Power that has proved superior to the Tempter: you must have that Power on your side. Place yourself by the side of Him who overcame in the wilderness, and the Devil will have no power to harm you. I have told you that temp-



tation is no temptation to you, except by the aid of sin within your heart. Then look to your own heart. Let it be filled with holiness and the love of God. Let Christ Himself dwell in your heart by faith: and then, when the Tempter comes to you and assails you, there shall be no traitor within to open the gate for him. He shall go away discomfited and abashed, and angels shall come and minister to you—feed you with bright hopes and high thoughts, to cheer you after the darkness and dreariness of your trial. I need not tell you how you are to receive Christ into your heart. He is not far from every one of you. He is knocking at the door of your heart daily. Only do you open, and take Him in. Find time, make time, to commune with Him, to read His Word, and draw Him down to you by prayer. Try to be like Him—to go about in your own little world as if He were at your side—turning from all that would offend Him, and cleaving to that which He loves. You know His will: you only want the heart to do it. And He will be with you, and you need not fear the hour of trial. You will be a precious thing in His sight: He will not suffer you to be lost.

And if, by your Redeemer's aid and blessing, you shall pass safely through the temptations of the Evil One, there will be nothing terrible to you

in those trials which your Father's love will lay upon you to prove you, and to establish your faith and love. For He who sends the trial will supply you with strength to meet it. And when you have thoroughly known and felt the love of God in Christ, you will not think it too much to make such sacrifices as He may call for. You will bring your two mites, and cast them in; or your costly ointment for the Saviour's feet; or leave the money and table, like Levi, to follow Him; or say, with Jonathan's son, careless of this world's good, "Yea, let him take all." Even the darling object of your heart, the Isaac of your affections, you will be enabled to give freely, that you may declare to God and the world the sincerity of your love.

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## SERMON XVII.

### REPENTANCE.

**JOHN xvi. 15.**—"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

THE history and the character of Simon Peter are very fruitful in lessons of high importance. We cannot fail of being interested and charmed, when we read of his earnest devotion, his vehement admiration of his Master; even his impetuosity has in it something that pleases us. And then, as the narrative goes on, and shows us the total overthrow of as fair a promise as ever natural man held out—his courage failing, his word broken, his Master denied; and again, the same Simon Peter restored, renewed, and reconciled, coming out really as a new man, and yet the

same—we learn, in one little story, a complete account of the works of nature, and the fruits of grace, and the essential difference between them.

The season of the year brings this character naturally under our consideration. One single point in the history will be enough for us this afternoon. His temptation and his fall have been already brought under your notice : let me lead you to consider with attention the more pleasing and not less instructive account of his reconciliation. Not less instructive, I say ; because, as the warning against temptation is of universal application, so this too—the means of finding our way back to Christ, when we *have* fallen away from Him—is what we all want to know at some time or other.

I shall not stay to consider the circumstances that led to the conversation in the text. The night of fruitless labour—the weary sad return of morning—the figure on the shore—the eye of love, the first to know that it was the Lord—and then the sorrowful bruised heart, the first to spring to meet Him—these things are full of meaning and of beauty. But we will pass on, till the Lord has taken Peter aside ; till the repentant sinner stands alone with Christ, face to Face, and spirit to Spirit ; and see what passed.

“ Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of

Jonas, *lovest* thou Me more than these?" The Lord speaks first; the sinner has nothing to say: and there is no word of reproof, no expression of pain or surprise at the greatness of his sin. Jesus knew his heart; He knew all that he had felt and suffered, from the moment when their eyes had met in the palace of the High Priest, after the thrice-repeated denial; and so He leads him at once to the one question on which his soul's life and health turned, "*Lovest thou Me?*" He did not expect that His servants and followers should be free from sin. Nay, He had foretold the very trial, and the very sin; and there was no room for surprise. But when this same Simon, who had thrice denied Him, utterly cast Him off, came and stood before Him, to renew, though silently, his broken vows, and to receive, not merely reconciliation, but the charge of feeding His flock, the Lord required an answer to this question, "*Lovest thou Me?*"

For this was the inquiry which our Lord had ever been making since He came into the world. He had been going about—He, the loveliest of the children of men—seeking some to love Him: and wherever He found them, His soul received them and welcomed them. No matter what might be their circumstances—outcasts though they were from society—defiled by long habits of sin—only

let them love Him, and they were His thenceforth for ever. It was because, in His last extremity, He found one heart open to love Him and desire to be with Him, that the dying malefactor was forgiven, and remains for ever on record, that sinners may not despair.

On the other hand, as to love Him is enough, so to love Him is altogether *needful*. He must be assured from Peter's own lips solemnly, deliberately, yea, thrice over, that he loved Him. This is an essential property of all His servants. In that white-robed host, that stands by the throne of God, there are varieties incalculable in other things—their talents widely different, their services vastly disproportionate—but in one thing they are all alike, they have all loved the Lord Jesus Christ.

Without therefore referring particularly to this question as being preparatory to the charge of feeding the flock of Christ—though in that light it conveys a grand lesson to all who have the ministry in view—but regarding it only as intended to probe the heart of His penitent servant, we learn this of the Lord's mind in such cases, that the one thing He looks for, in those who come to Him for pardon and reconciliation, is a loving heart; and that, as this is the one thing needful,

so, as we learn from its threefold repetition, *this* is thrice needful, yea, altogether needful.

Our Lord's purpose, in asking Peter if he loved Him more than the rest, may probably have been, to remind him how he had sinfully vaunted his fidelity above the others, a short time before, and to see whether his experience had served to humble him. But as this part of the question was not repeated, we may suppose it to be not essential; and the question remains as another testimony that, in His eyes, the only difference among us is, between those who love Him, and those who love Him not. And how could Simon Peter answer this question? When he thought upon his ingratitude, his cowardice, his faithlessness, *could* he look in his Master's face, and say that he loved Him? No doubt the tempter was at work within, suggesting precisely such thoughts to him; and, no doubt, if he had been answering before a tribunal of this world, however conscious of his own truth and sincerity, he would scarcely have ventured to answer as he did. But that which would be to most men their chief terror, was to him his greatest encouragement. He was in the presence of One who knew *all* his heart; whose eye had pierced deeper than the sin, and the weakness, and the fears; and

saw there a steady, growing, heaven-implanted principle of love. And so he ventured to say to the all-seeing God what half-seeing man would have scorned and disbelieved, "Yea, Lord ; Thou knowest that I love Thee." As on the Lord's part there was no allusion to his late sin, so on the servant's part there is no extenuation of the past, no professions for the future. His Lord, with mercy beaming from His countenance and on His lips, asked the one question ; *that* he could answer in spite of all that had passed. His own heart condemned him not there ; and he felt that he had to do with One who is greater than the heart, and knoweth all things.

And so the penitent was received and pardoned by One who never forgives by halves, and at once entrusted with the care of the Lord's flock.

Now I need not say, this is a lesson for us. Who is there here that has not had occasion to be sorry for sin and go to Christ for forgiveness ? It is a thing of perpetual recurrence with us ; in some way or other, we deny and forget our Friend and Master, and then have to meet Him again, and renew our broken pledges. But further, I can have no doubt there are some here who at this moment are in circumstances far more nearly similar to Simon Peter's than this—some who have followed the Lord, steadily and heartily,



when the way was comparatively smooth and easy ; who have not been ashamed or afraid, but, on the contrary, unfeignedly happy, to be with Him in those sheltered spots and chosen companies, where all were of one mind, where all loved Him, and called Him Master : but when the time has come that they find themselves among those who hate Him, or are indifferent to Him, among whom His Person and his Name are dishonoured ; then, if Galilean speech has betrayed them, and they are challenged with being His followers, how soon does their courage melt away, their faith grow cold, their fears overcome them, and they deny that they ever knew Him ! Though their hearts do indeed yearn after Him, they suppress and smother their better feelings ; and join in the crowd, and make as though He were nothing to them, and never had been anything, but a stranger.

And perhaps the Lord has turned and looked upon them, as He did on Peter ; and, in the midst of the stir of the world in which they move, they cannot get rid of the impression of His last looks. The remembrance of Him whom they have deserted haunts them and disturbs them. Fainter, no doubt, this impression becomes every day : but still it exists at present ; and, while it lasts, there is hope that it may send them to Christ again.

Suppose, then, that Christ has called you aside : follow Him, and hear what He will say to you. I know how many feelings will join to keep you back—how many voices from within will clamour against the invitation—how many artful insinuations of the subtle one, appealing to your shame, your indolence, your passions, your tastes, will whisper you away from Him. But go after Him boldly, and heed them not. You *must* meet Him, you know, face to face, one day : better to meet Him now, when He is waiting to be gracious. You know from this history what He will say to you. He has but one question to put to penitents of every age and every degree : there is but one qualification for pardon on the part of the sinner : without this, all attempts to win His favour—prayer and penance, tears and fastings—are vain : with this, your pardon is your's already : “He loves them that love Him.”

The question therefore is addressed to you—you, whoever you are, that will go aside with Jesus, and offer yourself again to His favour—“Lovest thou Me ?” If you wish to answer this question truly, you must not turn your eyes in to your own heart, or try to weigh and analyse all your feelings with regard to Christ, or, I fear, you will be dismayed and bewildered at the confusion that reigns there ; and when you see how your

affections for the Person of Jesus, and your desires after His truth, are entangled and overlaid by the heap of vain thoughts and sinful passions that have taken possession, you will be frightened at the thought of saying, as Peter did, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." And though the heart *must* be searched, and *must* be cleansed, by God's help, before the work of preparation for heaven is done, yet, as I now wish to encourage you to stand before the Lord, I say again, Look out from your own heart, and up to Christ. Think how His name has been from your childhood associated with everything holy and beautiful. Think of what He has done for you—think of what He has suffered for you—think of what He offers to give you; and then, if your heart burns and swells within you at such thoughts—if you go back with fond remembrance to the days of your happier intercourse with Him, and you long to have it so again—surely you may answer, as He would have you answer, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And if it is so, He will believe you, in spite of all that seems against you. Though your sins have been of such a kind, that the world holds it absolutely impossible that you should love Him, yet, if it is so, He knows it, and believes it.

Perhaps it may seem to some of you that I

am representing it as a very easy thing to be reconciled with Christ after you have offended Him and denied Him. Far from it. It *may* be an easy thing, and it is, comparatively, to show all the outward marks of contrition that man's ingenuity has ever invented: but to love Christ as Peter loved Him, who shall say that this is a small or an easy matter? Such love, in fact, contains every principle of the full Christian character, and will, to a certainty, bear all its fruit. Who can doubt, for instance, that Peter's sorrow for his past sin was deep and genuine, and his love sincere, when we compare his subsequent with his former life—when we see him, who a few weeks before could not face a handful of servants at the high priest's door, now stand before that high priest himself and all the council, and calmly tell them that he must obey God rather than men; and then go home to his friends, and thank the Lord that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name? When, therefore, I tell you that love of Christ is everything, do not suppose that I exclude all the other fruits of the Spirit. Rather understand that they are all included in love—that you cannot love Him, unless your repentance is genuine—unless your faith is clear and healthy—unless your will is firmly bent to follow him at any cost—unless, in short, your whole character as

a Christian is stronger than before your fall. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal!"

And so, though I bid you take courage, and say as Peter did, if you really feel as he did, I must also bid you remember what great things you are professing, when you come back after your sin, and stand alone with Christ, and tell Him that you love Him. You must answer as you will at His judgment-seat, when He and you and all the world will know the inmost secrets of your heart, without the possibility of concealment. Your conscience will tell you truly, if you ask it fairly. For, however we may talk of the difficulty of self-knowledge—though we commonly say that a man's neighbours know him better than he knows himself—I have no doubt that every one here has secrets in his heart that are known only to God and himself. You may easily deceive your neighbours, your friends, your guardians, your parents; but you cannot so easily deceive your own consciences. And yet, by continual attempts, I know that even this voice of God within you may be rendered use-

less. The devil will counterfeit its tones, and whisper more pleasing things to you, and wholly engage your attention. But here remember, even if you deceive the world around you, even if you deceive your own hearts, He, with whom you now stand, is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things.

Above all, you must not say, either falsely or lightly, such words as these, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." There is no encouragement here for those, whose repentance is hasty and shallow, whose love is a feeble spark, soon kindled, and as soon extinguished. I need not tell you that such characters are common among you, who are always making resolutions, always professing to love the Lord, and then again falling away in time of trial; who, in fact, make it an easy thing to sin, and then to repent, and then to sin again.

The main difference between their character and Peter's is this. His faith and his love were more vigorous after his fall than before: their's become more feeble after every fall and every repentance. Satan is daily gaining a faster hold on their souls, cheating them all the time by these pretended acts of repentance, and false hopes of reunion with Christ, until at last they will

have neither the inclination nor the power to leave their sins and return to Christ.

Beware, therefore, how you venture to stand as a penitent sinner before Him. Think well what you have to answer to His question. Do not make it a common thing to repent, or you will find it a common and an easy thing to sin again. But if you truly desire to be reconciled, and if your love will stand the appeal to His all-seeing eye, let no fears of His anger frighten you away from Him. He is the same gracious Lord who received Simon Peter. Do as Peter did—hasten to meet Him, and wait for the word of pardon. And let no whispers of the enemy of man, no suggestions of your insincerity or doubts of your love, keep you back from your only safety; but take the shortest way to Him, and, in spite of your weakness, your fears, your past sins, your present embarrassment, open your heart fearlessly, and say, “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.” You may be assured that He, whose love for mankind brought Him from heaven to suffer and die for us when we were His enemies; who runs to meet the returning prodigal when he is yet afar off, and falls on his neck; who leaves his ninety and nine sheep to go after one that is lost; will never

cast out any sinner that will go to seek Him with a loving and a yearning heart. He is not only willing to receive such, His heart longs for them : they are a part of His soul's travail, without which He cannot be satisfied. You are waited for : you shall be welcomed : there shall be mirth and gladness in your Father's house, and joy in the presence of the angels in heaven.



## SERMON XVIII.

## THE GLORY THAT EXCELLETH.

HAGGAI ii. 9.—“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.”

THERE can be no doubt that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is foretold in these words of the Prophet. The temple which was built by the Jews on their return from captivity was so poor in form and decoration, contrasted with the former house of God which had been destroyed, that no comparison could be made between them on the score of grandeur or beauty. Many signs of the Divine presence too, which had been the glory of the first, were wanting in the second temple; so that those Jews, who had seen the former house of God, wept when they saw the foundations of the latter laid, beholding how “the glory was departed

from the holy and beautiful house in which their fathers praised Him."

But the Prophet stood on higher ground, and could look further into the darkness of coming ages than the rest of the people: and he saw afar off a ray of light shining from heaven, and lighting up the house which they were building; he beheld the Desire of all nations come and fill it with the brightness of His presence.

However, the Jews, as a nation, could not understand these prophetic descriptions of their promised Saviour. They were perplexed by the variety, the seeming contradictions, of the reports. At one time He was represented as coming in glory and triumph; at another, as being led like a lamb to the slaughter: now, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength; and again, as a root out of a dry ground, with no beauty that they should desire Him. Their eyes were blinded, so that they could not understand the mystery of God. They did not perceive the true character of their Messiah, or the true nature of His kingdom: and so, when He came, they could not receive Him.

The words of the text, apart from their more immediate application, seem naturally to suggest a comparison in general between the Old Covenant and the New; such a comparison as St.

Paul drew in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, when he asserted that all the glories of the Law and its offices had “no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.” And such a comparison can never be unprofitable to us, because we have many temptations to forget what is the true character, the real glory, of the dispensation into which we have, by the blessing of God, been called. Particularly at this season \* of the year, when we are invited to receive, as it were, our Lord and Saviour at His coming, we shall do well to recollect ourselves, and see whether we have clearly apprehended the majesty and the beauty of the Gospel Covenant and its Great Minister.

And first, let us fairly admit that, in all outward signs of glory, in all that is beautiful and terrible to the carnal eyes and mind, the Law was throughout, in every particular, far more glorious than the Gospel.

For, in the delivery of the Law, recollect how every circumstance attending it was calculated to impress on the senses and minds of the Israelites the greatness, and power, and glory of God. He Himself came down upon Sinai to speak with men: He did but touch the mountain, and it smoked. “Mount Sinai was altogether on a

smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off." Moreover, as one might almost expect, the man whom He had chosen to go between Himself and His people was so changed in person and appearance, by standing in the presence of God, that when he came down from the mount, with the rays of heavenly light still resting on his face, the people could not bear to look upon him; so beautiful and so terrible, in sight and sound, was the delivery of the Law by the ministry of Moses.

And the same grand and glorious appearance was maintained in all the forms and ordinances prescribed by the Law for the worship of God. The presence of the Lord among his people was a visible presence. They could see with their eyes, and point with their fingers, to the very spot where their God was. "For a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle: and the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all

the house of Israel, throughout all their journeyings."

And as it pleased Him to reveal Himself to them thus locally and visibly, I mean in such a manner that they could see the very spot where He was, and mark when He moved, and when He rested, so the dwelling which it pleased Him to inhabit was, in all its plan and decorations, fitted for the honour of receiving the Divine Majesty, as far as the work of man might be. I need not describe to you the tabernacle of the wilderness, and its contents. You know how fully and exactly the form and the beauty of it, with its furniture and its vessels, is described by the inspired writer. Made after the pattern which God Himself showed to Moses in the Mount—made by the hands of one who was taught by the Spirit of God for that very work—it was perfectly beautiful and good, as every thing that proceeds from the mind of God must be. And this was but a temporary resting-place for the ark of God, such as might serve until His favoured servants should provide a more suitable abode for His glorious Majesty. When, at length, this had been founded and reared by the pious hands of Solomon, then the glory of God among His chosen people seemed to be complete. All the earth contributed its wealth, and labour, and skill, to

enrich and beautify it; and it became the very centre of the worship and affections of the whole Jewish nation.

So, whether we look at the manner in which the Law was given, with the trumpet-like voice of God speaking out of the midst of thunder and lightning; or at the continual presence of God among the people, His habitation and His worship; all was grand and glorious and terrible to the eyes of men.

And, in like manner, the administration of His worship, the service of the Priest, possessed a dignity far surpassing all other offices. I suppose that no man ever saw or imagined so very solemn and beautiful a sight as that which was to be seen, once in every year, at the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, on that day on which the High Priest, clad in purest white, went in to the Holiest place within the veil to stand before God, and make atonement for the sins of the people; and afterwards came forth, and took again his garments, rich all over and dazzling with light and splendour—the robe and the breastplate, burning with gold and purple and scarlet, for glory and for beauty, and the many-coloured glitter of the precious stones—the ephod and the broidered coat—the mitre and the girdle—and as he walked, the golden bells that hung around the

hem of the ephod sounded clearly and sweetly, so that his sound might be heard when he went in to the holy place, and when he came out. How solemn and awful must have been the feelings of the worshippers as they waited without, and looked upon the thin veil that alone separated them from the very Presence and Person of God ! How must they have almost worshipped the man to whom alone it was permitted to stand in that holy place ! As far, surely, as outward circumstances could avail—in form, and dress, and ceremonies—the temple and its services must have been in the highest degree glorious and solemn.

Now compare the Law with the Gospel in these particulars—the ministry of Moses who brought the Law from Sinai, and of Aaron who ministered under it, with that of Jesus Christ, the messenger and minister of the Gospel. No thunder and lightning has startled us into listening to the words of our Covenant. There was no voice of a trumpet to make us tremble : the wailing of an infant in a manger is the first sound of *this* Covenant. “ My servant shall not strive nor cry,” saith the Lord. It must have been in a very gentle tone that He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, “ Blessed are the poor in spirit : for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.”

Again, the Messenger of our Covenant did not come to us with such a glory on His face that we cannot bear to look upon Him. No heavenly effulgence radiated with terrible beauty from His eyes. For however painters have fondly imagined Him, He came in humble state, without form or comeliness. Nay His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; for on it were the scars of thorns, and the furrows of tears, and the stain of spitting.

But further, we have no visible sign of God among us—no cloud by day—no fire by night. We cannot point to any place or any building where He dwells. The book of *our* Covenant gives no directions for the form of a temple, the arrangement of a service, the dress of a priest. "Let all things be done decently and in order," is the sum of our instruction on this head. It was by no splendour of service or solemnity of ceremonial that the worship of Jesus stood in competition with the adoration of Diana at Ephesus. Our great ceremony took place once for all at Calvary. We have no priest, but the One High Priest, even Jesus, whose priesthood is unchangeable. This our Priest is present with every generation. He officiates for us now, as He did for the men who lived eighteen hundred years



ago. His sacrifice is always fresh, always effectual for expiation and atonement.

This, then, is our case in respect of outward glory. We have no visible presence of God among us—no temple—no priests to make daily atonement for us. Our One High Priest, as He went to the great sacrifice, was jeered, and beaten, and spitted on. He is now gone within the veil, and we stand without, waiting.

And yet the Prophet says, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” Yet St. Paul says, “If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” It is a glory of another kind—a glory spiritual and heavenly—to be apprehended only by those who are taught by the Spirit, and whose minds and thoughts are of heaven. To such minds it is easy of apprehension how the Person of Jesus, standing in that second temple, filled it with a glory infinitely surpassing all the typical decorations of the first; and how His Presence in the Christian Church brings with it a beauty and a grandeur as far above that of the tabernacle as heaven is above earth.

Those who are children of the family of God must think the thoughts of God, and must speak His language. We must call that wisdom which

is the wisdom of God, and those rich who are rich to God, and that glory which He has declared to be "the glory that excelleth." Now He has nowhere told us that there is anything glorious in the glitter of gold and silver and precious stones and ivory: on the contrary, even to the Jews, who yet lived under the obligation of His Law, He continually declared by His prophets that He cared not for all the form and pomp of their services. "Incense is an abomination unto Me; your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them."

No: the most glorious thing—as far as it has been revealed to us—the most glorious thing, in the judgment of God, is, to show forth all the perfections of His nature—His power, His wisdom, His justice, His mercy. And these are shown, singularly and pre-eminently combined, in the Person of Jesus Christ, in the salvation of man through Him, and in the subjugation and destruction of the kingdom of Satan. For Jesus is the brightness of His Father's glory, and in this work of His consists the expression of that glory.

So that if there is any one passage in His ministry on earth, on which the accomplishment of that work seems most specially to turn, that moment

is the summit of God's glory : and therefore the nearer the cross, the brighter the glory of the Saviour. Hence, on the solemn night when Judas was gone out, Jesus said, "*Now* is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Hence too St. Paul, who is always at the centre and core of the Gospel, says, "God forbid that I should *glory*," (that is, pride myself,) "save in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ;" because that, upon which the men of this world pour forth all their scorn, shooting out the lip and wagging their head, is and must be, to the forgiven penitent, the very joy and pride and happiness of his life.

Besides, the second temple possessed the substance of all those things which were but shadowed in the first. The very reason indeed why the temple and its worship were so grand and glorious was, that thereby men might be prepared for the spiritual grandeur and glory of the Gospel. The blood of slain beasts, flowing for ever from the altar, did but represent to the faithful the fountain that was to be opened at Calvary. The golden candlestick, with its seven branches burning continually with holy oil, was but an earthly figure of the most Holy Spirit of God, Whom Christ should send from the Father, and from Whom the true worshippers should receive their light. The High Priest in perpetual succession,

in his glorious apparel, going in, after sprinkling of blood, within the veil, was a type of the Eternal High Priest, who should be clothed with the helmet of salvation, and the breast-plate of righteousness, glittering with His precious acts of mercy and words of truth, and should go in, once for all, into heaven, attended by the hymns of angels and praises of saints, sweeter than bells of gold.

And yet, though the word of God has so plainly showed that His glory, His worship, the service that He loves, is purely spiritual; though the Son of God came in such a form as to shame the pride and presumption of the carnal worshipper; yet, I say, we have in us a natural craving after that which is visible and palpable.

And this is the account of the main corruption of the Gospel. Men would have a temple again, with its altar and holy place, and a sacrifice, and a priest from among themselves to take the responsibility off their own souls, and go in alone where Christ has opened the way for all to go in. And so error followed on error; and, even now, we see a corrupt church carrying men back to the shadowy forms of the covenant of works—to the painting and the gilding—the postures and the dress—the tinkling of bells and the burning of perfumes and the lighting of lamps—and all this, because their eyes are blinded so that they cannot

see, and their hearts hardened so that they do not feel, the true glories of the kingdom of Christ. And if ever any of you are tempted to sigh for a more splendid ceremonial than our forefathers, in the wisdom of simplicity, adopted for our common worship, I beseech you to call to mind, that all outward form and show belongs essentially to the *shadow*. The true worshippers worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

Thus the glory of the second temple, as also the glory of the Christian Church, consisted in the Presence and Person, the words and the acts, of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. But where is it now? Is the glory withdrawn from us, during all this time that He is within the veil, and we are waiting for His second appearing? By no means. He dwells among us still by His Spirit. He inhabits a temple dearer to Him than even the hill of Zion. His glory is still to be seen by those who have eyes to see it.

For, in the sight and judgment of God, one restored soul—one living being that has been rescued from sin, sprinkled by the blood of Christ, and transformed by His Spirit into His image—is infinitely more glorious, immeasurably fitter for the habitation of His Spirit, than the most gorgeous temple that was ever reared on the earth. And yet so dull are we in apprehending

spiritual things, that we are filled with reverence when our eyes and ears are taken captive by a rich building and a solemn service, while too often we cannot discern the real presence of God in the temple which He best loves to inhabit—I mean a humble faithful Christian.

Let me say it again : inasmuch as there is more of God's power, wisdom, and mercy displayed in saving one soul, than in the creation or overthrow of worlds, it follows, that one saved soul—the thief on the cross if you will—is a more beautiful and glorious sight—if we had eyes to see and hearts to feel it as the angels have—than Sinai with its robe of lightning, and the temple of Solomon rich with gold and ivory, and all the ceremonies and solemnities of the Law of Moses. Neither the first temple nor the second could secure the continual presence of God : but if there is a soul here that has heartily mourned over its sin, and has found hope and peace in Jesus Christ, that soul is a temple in which the ineffable majesty of God for ever dwells.

And now that you know wherein consists the true glory of the Church of Christ—not in material things, not in outward show, but in the presence of His Spirit in the renewed souls of men—what is the practical lesson that we should every one lay to heart? Besides the general feeling of

reverent thankfulness for the glories of the Covenant which God has made with us, many thoughts must suggest themselves to the intelligent Christian, as he reads over the ordinances and ceremonies, and all the magnificent services enjoined upon the Jews. First of all, we may be thankful that we are spared such a burden—that we have a lighter yoke upon us than they. We are not obliged to go through all those forms, to bring so many costly offerings, to be for ever washing out the stain of sin upon us with water and with blood, and for ever finding that we have need of more blood and more washings.

This is one reasonable thought; but there is another behind. It is true we are spared all the labour and the cost of the temple worship. But is there, therefore, *no* service required of us? Have we not seen rather that God has a more beautiful temple than ever—a more acceptable worship—a more excellent Priesthood? He is preparing a temple for his honour to inhabit, not of stones and wood, of gold and ivory, but of men's souls, of your souls, if you will give them for the purpose. This is the present work on which His Spirit is busy—hewing out stones from the quarry, framing and fitting and polishing them by manifold labour and discipline, like a cunning workman, until the whole building, fitly framed together, shall

grow unto an holy temple in the Lord. You can help, if you will, in this blessed work. You can give your own soul into the hands of this heavenly Builder, to be fitted into the temple. You can yield it up to Him, that He may remove all that is rough and false and impure; and you can keep your heart with all diligence, that no stain of sin may cleave to it, and mar the beauty of the Lord's dwelling place.

Again, there is a sacrifice still ever going on. You may come and present yourselves with the rest—not by now and then bringing a calf or a lamb for a propitiation, but by presenting your own bodies a living sacrifice, morning and evening, day and night, unto God—holy and acceptable—which is your reasonable service. Instead of washing your bodies with water before you approach God on certain days, you must always be washing your soul and keeping it clean with the tears of repentance, and after that—for tears cannot take away sin—by still continually, through faith, sprinkling them with the blood of the One Sacrifice.

And as God has provided for Himself a more glorious temple and a richer sacrifice in the Gospel than in the Law, so has He still a Priesthood. All are priests in his sight, who come to Him with the sacrifice of Christ. The veil no



longer separates us from the mercy-seat. It was rent when our great sacrifice Christ was offered ; and thenceforth we are all invited to go in through the new and living way, that we may obtain mercy and find grace.

Reflect then that this question, of the glory of God in His Church, is a matter that nearly and intimately concerns the soul of each of you. He requires for the consummation of His majesty a temple to dwell in, and He asks you to receive Him into your hearts. He wants a sacrifice to be perpetually offered, and He asks for your bodies and your lives. He demands a Priesthood for His service, and He offers to make you all Priests. And if you will only surrender yourselves into His hands, He will make of you, the humblest and the vilest, a more glorious sight for men and angels, than ever the temple of Solomon was. And we must not forget on this day, that though the glory of Christ Jesus on earth was the reverse of all human grandeur,—consisting in weakness and suffering, hunger and thirst, shame and pain—it will be otherwise at His second coming. When our High Priest went within the veil, His richest crown was the mark of thorns—His most triumphant decorations, the emaciation of fasting, and the print of wounds. But it shall be another sight when He shall come again fresh from the

presence and throne of His Father in heaven. Then His glory shall be like that of Sinai, but a thousandfold more beautiful and terrible ; only, for the comfort of His humble, trembling servants, the cross shall appear, as the seal and crown of all the glory.

Let us learn from this, what must be our course, our progress—through humility to honour. We must learn to love Him and admire Him and adore Him, first as a helpless infant ; then as a despised wanderer ; a friend betrayed ; a benefactor scorned ; a solitary, derided, dying outcast. It is no natural taste, believe me, to find our pride and our pleasure in loving and following and imitating such a Person. But if we cannot do so in this life, we shall not be found worthy of the more perfect glories of the next. We must follow our Captain through the battle, or we may not hope to enjoy the victory.

Lay these things to heart, and learn to understand the true blessings and the true dignity of the Gospel of Christ. Remember always how nearly you are concerned in God's glory upon earth, how much you may do to exhibit it : and when you feel that you can really find your joy and your happiness and your pride in following Christ through shame and contempt and neglect, if need be, then you may reasonably rejoice when

you celebrate His first coming in great humility, and hope that, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty—as come He will, when He has made up the number of His elect—you may rise to the life immortal, and see the glory which He has with His Father.

THE END.

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